

# THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE

EDITED BY  
LEONARD HUXLEY



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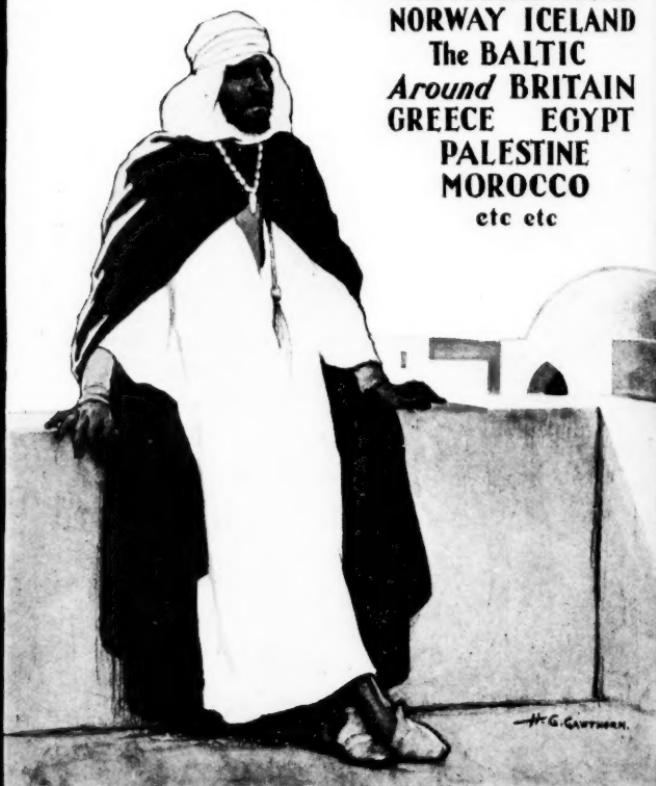


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THE  
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

MARCH 1930.

*POLYCHROMATA.*

BY J. LESLIE MITCHELL.

*IX. VERNAL.*

I.

NOON and April and eighty-four in the shade ! Who would dream it, here in the Khalig-el-Masri, that the Spring is in our northern lands, and the wind and the rain ? . . . Grey clouds and shadows and the whoop-whoop-whoop of birds in mist, and the calling of lost sheep. God mine, how to-day the Volga must be crying through the willows ! There are boatmen singing there, and the dance of the waters, and all the earth coming so green. . . .

And nowhere such foolish ache of heart as mine in Cairo !

How does it stir us so, here where Spring is a day and a night, more fugitive than a dream ? No mere season, surely, but the mood universal that comes every year to cry of things undone and unachieved. . . . Eh ? Oh, the lips unkissed and the poems unwritten and the mountains unscaled and the sins unforgiven and the hearts unfrozen. . . . We stir from the so-dreamless sleep of the day-to-day and wake and stare—even here in Cairo where the Spring is as a girl who passes with hastening feet and urgent eyes. . . . As once I saw her pass.

Beat on the table for the little Simon, my friend, and I—God mine, if only I may forget my Volga and the willows !—will tell you the story that for me still haunts each Cairene Spring.

II.

In the beginning was God, and He created James Freeman. And James Freeman served Him all the days of his life. . . .

This is not blasphemy. It is paraphrase on the wording quaint of that English Bible wherein I sought to master style in the Gymnasium of Kazan. So of himself always I think believed James Freeman. Long before we met here in Polychromata, and watched the little drama unfold to that evening in Spring, was he assured of the standing with his God. Since childhood had that standing been certain below his feet.

Of your English sects I know but little, and that little from Dickens and Trollope and the casual mention and the tale without footnotes—as told me it was by Norla and the Dr. Adrian, and ultimately James Freeman himself. But it seems he was born of parents who early designed him a priest, and themselves held by the faith of some church that conforms not to your national belief. This in the English provincial town where was smoke and glare of furnaces night and day to furnish the so-ready similes for the hell of the conforming wicked.

When I met him he was tall and thick-browed, with the white hair and stooping shoulders and the rasp of voice. He had the face that seemed to me as the face of a lion—if one might think of the lion that had forsaken the meat for other food—perhaps because the meat had disagreed with him. . . .

But that is the description unfair. He was of a type outside my comprehension and love—surely the priest-type that goes fast from the world. Since the age of twenty he had preached and believed the ancient, cruel God of sacrifice and supplication and the bitter codes. By the age of twenty-five he had had the church of his own, and in the glare of those furnaces, himself already twisted and bitter and white-earnest, preached salvation and damnation in name of his God.

And then, in that twenty-fifth year, he had loved and desired and married.

How comes love to such as those? I think it moved and shook him, and perhaps he was the lion he had forgone, and there were the nights of stars and the scents of the veldt when the world and its sins fell from him, and he and his mate were alone and splendid under splendid skies. . . . Surely, surely. And then—

I think he came out of the love ecstasy in the sudden—looked at himself, and through the strange, distorting mirrors of his beliefs saw himself one unclean and lustful, a sinner in the jargon of his creed. Perhaps in a night his restraints and tabus came back on him again. And with them must have come that harshness of demeanour and expression bred of his own repressions and tortured inhibitions. . . . To one who had known him only the lover he became the cold and affrighting fanatic.

She must have lived in the hell he was incapable of imagining, spite his furnaces and sin-creed. Of her kind there have been the pitiful many. They have gone uncomplaining and unrecorded to the dead: but for their slow fate was not Mary Freeman.

I never knew her, and to me she is but a dream. But I think of her as one awakened to wonder and desire, and then starved. For nearly the six years she endured that life—or had it ceased to be the endurance till there came re-awakening and the call of the stars again? They had the child, the girl of five, Norla, and perhaps that tie had held her. They lived in your London by then, in some suburb where was church of their sect.

And suddenly, without the note or notification, she was gone. The mystery was not the mystery for long. Near at hand had lived the political, a Russian, an artist, and he was gone also.

It was the Spring, in March, and Freeman met her leaving by the gate of his house, and singing a little song. He spoke to her and she said strange words, not looking at him. 'I am going out to seek the Spring.'

He turned and looked after her, I think, in a moment of astonishment, and watched her out of sight. Nor did she ever return.

### III.

She wrote to him from the south of France, asking that she might be divorced and so marry the Russian. Again, at the end of a year, she wrote, the pitiful letter saying that the Russian was dead. To neither letter was reply sent by James Freeman. He brought his sister to rear his child and barred out into the night that pitiful face that surely came to haunt him after the second letter.

He became preacher of the savage purity, persecutor of the poor outcasts of the streets. Throughout the War he preached a God of Battles tied to the gun-carriages, and in the after-War ecstasy of self-flagellation your London took him to its heart. He addressed the great demonstrations, organised the violent crusades. From denouncing the sins of the age in the little, unknown church he was invited as preacher in your cathedrals and made the divine doctor and given a great church.

But he was already an old man. The bitterness had overflowed from his heart to his body. There came on him the chronic rheumatism and he was ordered to the sun and South France by the so-assiduous doctors.

But to go to the South France he refused with a surprising outbreak of violence. He handed over the great London church to the substitute, and came to Egypt, to Helwan, and later to Cairo.

With him he brought his daughter Norla.

## IV.

I may never think of the Spring but I remember Norla Freeman ; I may never read in your little gazettes of the modern woman who lacks the seemly dullness and virtues but I think of this English girl. For she was refutation of all the printed spite of us of the superseded generation. Cold and stark and vivid. . . . And yet the Spring !

My friend Dr. Adrian took me to the Pension Avallaire and made the introductions between us. She sat in the garden, in a dream, when we came upon her. She had that red hair known to the old painters and it was the sudden flame of colour against the Pension greenery.

'Miss Freeman, this is Colonel Anton Saloney, of the Russian White Army and the Republic of Plato.'

This is the good Adrian's jest, because that I am unmarried and hold belief in men yet upbuilding the ultimate wise state.

'I am from Utopia myself.' She was tall and slender, standing so, red-crowned, with the serene purity of laughter in opal eyes. She sighed. 'Dr. Adrian will have explained to you. My father is an invalid and can't take me round Cairo. I—' she considered the garden '—sketch. My father insists that someone should go with me, and Dr. Adrian suggested you.'

She had an aloofness that puzzled me, but that later I was to know so well. Defence it was she had erected—she who found sunsets of more interest than souls—against that world of meaningless enthusiasm and denunciation and hysteria in which she had been reared.

'I shall be of the honoured,' I said, 'if you think me suitable.'

Then was the sudden smile again and the peep of friendliness.

'I like you. Will you come and talk to my father ?'

I followed her to where Dr. Freeman sat on the balcony of his room, with below it the garden of Esbekiyeh and the sunshine and the changing colours of our Cairo. He peered at me from beneath the heavy brows. He did not offer to shake the hands. I was only a dragoman.

She turned to leave us, then bent over her father, adjusting the cushions, and in that so-simple action I had a sudden glimpse of vivid strength and certitude of character, the reality like the current below the surface-serene river. The Dr. Freeman looked after her and then spoke in the pulpit voice.

'Dr. Adrian tells me you are reliable, which is not the case with natives. Are you a gentleman ?'

I made him the bow. 'My ancestors have cut throats for nine centuries.'

He crouched in his chair, the old priest with twinging bones, humourless and cold, considering me. 'You will be required to select the places fit for Miss Freeman to visit. I do not wish her to see the filthy and unclean sights of Cairo. Understand ? Nor to make chance acquaintances amongst strangers or your friends. You will remember that you are my employee and hers.'

I, the ex-Professor of the English Literature, have withstood much of this, my friend, and also have built my defence. I take refuge in irrelevant conjecture and fantasy. . . . That daughter of his—surely I had seen her the many times before ?

Out in the garden of the Pension she waved me the au revoir. And suddenly I remembered.

One might see her face in a hundred prints and pictures. For so, the girl unawakened, the Lady of Serenity, is portrayed on the ikons the Sitt Miriam, the Virgin Mary of the Coptic Church.

#### V.

You must bear that picture of her, my friend : early dawn in the northland Spring. Never the bird-song or the morning wind or the flying clouds yet had she known ; she did not dream that a soul may flame splendid as never a sunrise.

Between us came very quickly the friendship. For was I not of the Republic of Plato and a dragoman to boot ? Not that she made consideration of these things. Cairo was hers, and all its sights and colours and sounds, and the funny Russian to make the occasional jest and order the taxi and row the boat and see to the provided lunch.

'But you have . . . talent,' I said, that first morning I took her to the Gamaliyah bazaar, and was allowed to look in her book of sketches. They were the pencilings and the charcoal work, tentative touchings and limnings, and they caught the breath. Yet I had been to say the something else before I looked closer. She knew it and the smile peeped from her eyes.

'But not "genius," Colonel Saloney ?'

'Some day that will come.'

She meditated a subject, eager and young and alien and wonderful against that brownness and flame of savage colour, where

the traders come with spices from the Red Sea lands and Arabia, and the camels droop in the long rows, and the air is sick with the smell of attar of roses. Then : ' If it doesn't come now, it never will. . . . That woman there, with the yellow skin and the jade ear-rings ! Do you think she would allow me ? '

I looked and saw a painted woman of the streets. ' I think a camelier would be the better.'

So one was found and posed and sketched, and she forgot the woman. Then we were threading the bazaars to the next view of interest, the next face that caught her attention, the next vivid glimpse of blue mosque against burnished sky, those lines and traceries that nowhere as in Cairo stand and threaten and then faint and crumble in the yellow haze of sun.

In the next days I took her to the Khan Khalil, to the restaurant in the Muski, to Old Cairo and the sleeping walls of Citadel. At Citadel it was, while she sat and sketched and I smoked the pipe that she uncovered for me a little history-chapter of that life that seemed to run with such swift serenity : the battle with her father before she could take the drawing lessons, before she could attend the colleges and lectures. They had fought this battle to an end, and she had won.

I took her to my Pyramids one morning, when they stood against the dawn, lonely, and with the mournful beauty, impressive not at all, but infinitely sad. I took her to the Museum one afternoon, and watched her stand amidst the bright flight of pigeons like one out of Plato or an old Greek myth. One afternoon I rowed her out from the bank of Dubara, down past el Roda, to a place in the afternoon sunlight where were the long reeds standing sentinel, and the water of the crystal clarity, and presently sunset amber upon all Cairo.

' It is as though the world were listening,' she said, and listened herself, like a child. And then, very far and remote in that silence, as though we were in the valley of Avalon, came on the Nile a nameless under-murmur.

' What is it, Colonel Anton ? '

' Cairo,' I said. ' Life.'

We turned down-stream, past the island, to the right bank, where the lines of houses amidst the water-lanes lifted in broken serration red against the sunset. I rowed the boat to the bank, to the shed of the Greek who leased it—a cousin of the little Simon, and also of the incredible surname Papadrapoulnakophitos—and

in a little we were walking up from the water-front through a street that had been of the so-silent three hours before.

But it was silent no longer, and I suddenly understood, and hurried the English girl who would have loitered. There were faces everywhere, seeming to have no bodies: faces in doorways, grey faces in windows, faces in apathetic groupings from which came the apathetic calling and twitter. . . .

Women's faces—there were only women, women of all ages and surely all nations—painted faces with dead eyes, and in all that street not a stir or a breath of air, but only the high, unreal voices and the dead laughter that comes from far back in the throat.

'Colonel Anton—all these women—we must come here again. What is this place?'

I looked at her and saw the answer to her own question dawn in horror and disgust in her eyes. I said nothing, and in silence we passed up through that street of shame.

## VI.

The last day of my engagement by the Dr. Freeman, Norla and I and the sketch-book spent far by the Bab-el-Futuh. We returned early to the Muski, to have the tea together as the parting feast, and in the old arabiye would have passed down the street to a restaurant we had before used, when opposite a new café we heard the sound of a violin. Thereat Norla stopped the arabiye and turned to me with the eager eyes.

'That music, Colonel Anton—Can we go there?'

'But of course,' I said, though with secret doubts. Yet it was the last day and there could come but little harm. . . .

So presently we were seated at the little table, in the packed restaurant, with the honey-cakes and Norla pouring tea, and the stout Egyptian women of the freed harems sitting near us, and the little Jew-men of the blue serge and yellow boots. Here and there was a Greek and once I saw an American. The band at the far end played with the raggedness.

'I hope that violinist plays again,' said Norla, and hardly had she spoken but the tanking of the piano ceased and the violinist stood up in the little hush.

I recognised him at once, and me also he recognised and smiled at, with his eyes straying to her who sat beside me. Then he began to play. As often, he was now making the improvisa-

tions, the little tunes that presently faded and altered, the ripple and the cadence and the strum. . . . He flung his gifts in our faces with the same carelessness that he flung himself in the face of life.

Alexandr Sergeyevich, who called himself Utrá—of the Morning. Thirty years of age, ex-aristo, revolutionist, anarchist. He had shed the name older in Russia even than mine, had at the age of eighteen written a successful opera, had in the civil war hoisted the Black Flag of Anarchy and held a country the size of Scotland against all comers—White, Green, and Red—for the full three months. Then he had passed to the Sovyeti, to Lunacharsky and the Department of Education and Culture, and the planning of a gigantic Palace of Music and the writing of the revolutionary song-cycle. But his anarchism was of the soul, and there was no discipline that might tame him. Within two years he was making his way from Russia while the Cheka watched the ports for his arrest. He and his violin had thenceafter wandered most of south Europe before he came to Cairo and greeted me one day in the Muski. . . . He had once been a student of mine in the English lectures at far Kazan.

Black of hair and eyes, with the brown face and the long, swift smile, and tall and slender. . . . Alexandr of the Morning, dreamer of dreams, born out of his due time. . . .

I awoke from the reverie and was suddenly conscious of one who sat beside me, stirred and transformed. I had glimpse of white face and rapt eyes, and then followed her look. Alexandr Sergeyevich, his eyes fixed on our table in a look that shocked me to realisation, was playing as never before I had heard him play.

He was playing my Volga and its willows and the shouting waters in the sun. Life in the morning he was playing, life running swift and sweet, and its call ringing and ringing like far laughter. He was playing that life that never was but always may be, love young and eternal and with ecstasy unquenched, love with shining feet and unbraided hair. . . .

He had finished and stood beside us. He had threaded the tables without the hesitation or doubt.

‘Miss Freeman,’ I said, ‘this is M. Utrá.’

She looked up at him. Dawning in her opal eyes was that which I had never seen before. They made none of the conventional greetings, but looked at each other in the white wonder.

'It was glorious,' she whispered. 'I never knew life could be like that.'

He spoke in the half-whisper also. 'Nor did I,' he said.

## VII.

In a week's time, while I was tramping the Ghizeh sands or helping the stout lady tourist to surmount the steps of Kheops Pyramid, *Alexandr Sergeyvich*, a little worried over the proprieties—he, the leader of the Black Bands!—was kissing the hands of his *Norla* in the garden of the Pension *Avallaire*.

'If you'll take me to your father, I will ask his permission.'

'Oh, my dear! . . .' And then the gravity. For they had met three times already, and after the third meeting he had written to her. 'That letter of yours—about all the happenings since you were a boy, and—and other women. . . . What is the past to me? I'm not an auditor.'

'You are divine,' he said, very humbly. And then, with his shattering earnestness: 'When will you marry me?'

'Whenever you like. But there's my father—he's an invalid still. . . . And I love him also.'

He had been the gentleman before he was the anarchist. Which of them was it that kissed her hands then? 'I shall write to your father and explain everything.'

And the next day this he did. He was a Russian of the revolution, you will remember. He told the Dr. Freeman of his love for *Norla* and his desire to marry her, he told of whom he was, of his life, his sins, his poverty. He wrote of those things with the starkness and simplicity of a *Gladkov*—that simplicity that leaves even the liberal of the older generation shocked and agape; he wrote with that devastating earnestness that was of his soul-fibre, and made none of the decorous attempts to gloss. . . .

To the Dr. Freeman, the preacher of purity crusades in London, it must have seemed as though he had received a letter from a polite and regretful fiend. He read it at breakfast, in the private room, and *Norla* was startled at the pallor on his face. He tried to get up, and made the unsuccessful attempts, with the rheumatism twinging his bones.

'This Russian anarchist and seducer'—he glared across the table with cruel eyes—'how long have you known him?'

She herself was to tell me of this conversation, and the little lie

she told then to shield me. 'A week. I met him by chance when I was separated from Colonel Saloney.'

He raved at her. 'You will not see him again, do you hear? Whatever the loose blood you inherit from your mother, I'll see that it's held in check.'

Once she would have kept the serene silence. But it was a new Norla whom *Alexandr Sergeyvich* was evoking.

'I will see him when I choose.'

He choked, with empurpled face. He made another effort to rise, then sank back with the groan. Their eyes met. In a moment, contrite, she was kneeling beside him.

'Daddy—I didn't mean that. . . . Let me help.'

And this he suffered her. I think he believed he had won, and that night he wrote to *Alexandr Sergeyvich* the letter which I will not quote. There is an obscenity of suspicion which goes with the dark old sacrifice-cults.

But while he wrote Norla also was writing. She had sat the long while in self-struggle, remembering that half-promise given to her father. But the old standards and the old allegiances—they were fading from her like the garments of gossamer.

Across in the Esbekiyeh Gardens was a dance and the scraping of violins. A night in mid-March it was, with the Cairene scents and the Cairene lights. But in the air the premonition of the something else that brought to her heart the sharp, sweet ache.

Far away, through miles and miles of your English lanes, the Spring was burgeoning that night.

### VIII.

At two o'clock next day, in response to the letter she had sent me, I was at the Pension Avallaire, and in a quarter of an hour, with the Dr. Freeman's consent, we were driving to the Nile in a taxi.

She had found it urgent to be rowed down to el Roda again, to make the final reed-sketches.

'We will go to the other place for a boat,' I said, with troubled remembrance of that street that led to the wharf of Simon's cousin.

She shook her head. 'I wrote reserving a boat—to the Papa-drapoulnakophitos man.' She twinkled the opal eyes. 'His name covered three lines on the envelope.' But she was grave. 'Colonel, I want to tell you . . .'

And so of the whole business I was told. I sat in the stunned

silence, and also a little of the horror, for am I not of my generation ? Utrá, the Black Anarchist—and this English girl !

‘What are you to do ?’ I asked. We were on the Nile by then, and I was rowing up-river. She shaded her eyes with her hand, looking into the heat-haze by left bank.

She did not answer my question. Suddenly were the little flags of excitement waving in her cheeks. ‘Turn in by that jetty, please.’

Unthinking, I drew up by a line of green timbers. In the moment someone was in the boat, and it rocking under his weight. While I stared at Alexandr Sergeyvich bending to the swift kiss of the English girl I made realisation of a story-plot in which I figured as the false clue.

#### IX.

‘This is unfair to me, Alexandr Sergeyvich,’ I said.

I had rowed them up-river, and they sat opposite me in that still place where once Norla had listened to the call of Cairo. It was she who answered.

‘There is nothing unfair, Colonel Anton. For you didn’t know. You can tell my father as soon as we go back. By then Sashka and I will have decided.’

‘Sashka !’ How had she come to that name already ? And then I saw on his face, as he looked at her, that which stilled forever some of the doubts that had tormented me.

‘We’ll marry,’ he said, ‘if you can love such fool as I am. I’ll write saleable songs and music, I’ll work myself to a shadow for you. And I know we’ll win.’

She trailed her hand in the water, not looking at him, but across at the sun above Moqattam. ‘And your anarchism and your dreams and your faith in freedom—you’ll give up all these ?’

He set his face and looked at her not either. ‘All these.’

She turned to him very swiftly. ‘You’ll give up nothing for me. My dear, do you think I don’t love you for your dreams as well ? You’ll put them in music that’ll shake the world yet—and I’ll paint them in pictures that’ll light it forever ! . . . Remember that thing you played in the Muski café ? We’ll live like that, you and I, and never grow old !’

‘Listen !’ I said.

They turned their faces towards me in surprise. And then, far away, from some hidden cote, it echoed down the river again

—that calling that Solomon heard these four thousand years ago in the hills of Palestine and set forever in magic words.

A rainbow sprang and vanished against the shores of el Roda. Trailing went by the thin curtain of rain. Behind the hills was already the disc of the sun, half-hidden.

I turned the boat and we drifted down the Nile between the tinted shores. Never-ceasing in that sunset silence was the calling of doves. Norla and Sashka had ceased to whisper, and sat hand in hand. And then Norla spoke in the serene voice that yet held a golden tremor.

‘Colonel Anton, will you go back to the Pension Avallaire and tell my father not to worry ? I am going with Sashka.’

I stared in the stupefaction. ‘But you cannot have the consulate marriage for many days. . . .’

Over Bulaq hung already the evening star. Already were the ghosts of shadows. And through them, answer to me, Norla Freeman’s laughter, very low and tender.

And then, in the helplessness, I understood. They had passed beyond the hold and restraint of me or anyone. The world and wonder was theirs to-night. . . .

The jetty. I pulled in, and in the moment we were on shore, walking up through that street where once I had hurried Norla. Towards the river was coming an arabiye, and we drew aside to let it pass.

But it did not pass. There came the sudden order in English, the groan of pain, and the Dr. Freeman was in the street beside us.

## X.

The false clue, you understand, had not misled him. From the first he had doubted Norla’s story of the sudden necessity of the reed-sketch, and with the passing of the day his doubts had increased. After we had gone from the Pension Avallaire he had driven to Sashka’s address, and, finding the Russian so-abominable neither there nor at his café, directed his arabiye to the boat-shed of Simon’s cousin. They had had difficulty in finding the street of approach, and the anger of his passenger had but seemed to increase the stupidity of the driver.

Of those things we learnt afterwards, but at the moment we stood and stared at him in that twilight street—I, at least, in consternation. He stood the moment in silence, leaning on the heavy stick, looking from one to the other of us, with for back-

ground the loitering, weary-faced women crowding in doorway and at window.

‘So you have been for a “final sketch”—you and the Russian “gentleman”? And who is this?’

Norla was white-faced, but she spoke in the voice as quiet as his. ‘This is *Alexandr Utrá*, whom I am going to marry.’

‘Another Russian “gentleman”? He glared at her malignantly and then made the foul sneer, standing there with quivering hand upon his stick.

‘M’sieu’—’

Sashka with the smouldering eyes confronting him. And then the Dr. Freeman gave evidence of that passion that seethed in him. He lifted his stick and struck with it, blindly, savagely....

For a moment was the foolish scrimmage in the street strangely hushed. Then I was holding the Dr. Freeman’s wrist the while he raved at us and in the eyes of Sashka glowed murder.

‘My God, my God !’

I thought it the moan of pain and released his wrist. He was staring up the street, and we followed his gaze. Even the eyes in the dim faces that backgrounded him turned to follow it. And in the street, though the Dr. Freeman was shivering as one in an ague, was nothing.

I caught his arm to support him. Some current seemed to shiver through me. And then I saw.

Down the street, emerged from a middle house, was coming a woman, fair and young and with red-coiled hair. With noiseless feet she came, looking neither to the left nor right, but ahead, with shining eyes, and for the wonderful moment I could smell the fragrance of the primrose pinned at her throat. With hasting feet, clad in the trailing dress, she went by, down to the shadows and the glow of the Nile, and as she passed I heard on her lips the murmur of a little song....

‘*Mary!*’

We lifted Dr. Freeman into the arabiye, and then Norla was shaking my shoulder.

‘What was he looking at?.... Colonel Anton, you’re dazed as well. What did he see come down the street?’

I looked, as one coming out of sleep, at the dimming Nile, at Sashka, at Norla, at the crowding faces.

‘I think it was the Spring,’ I said.

## XI.

I shall not tell you of the talk I had the next evening with an old priest very broken and frightened, nor of the little gathering a fortnight later at the Presbyterian Church, where Alexandr Sergey-vich Utrá was married by the father of the bride to a Norla who bore the great bunch of English primroses, and stood with shining eyes, there, surely at the Gate of Spring. . . .

But within twelve hours of that happening in the street of shame I had gone back there, making enquiries at the middle house on the right side of the street. For the little they would give me no answer, those women with the dead eyes, and I was turning away, when one in the doorway leaned and whispered to me.

‘Yes, there was one who died in this house yesterday. In the evening, at sunset.’ There came the high, toneless laughter from far back in her throat. ‘An Englishwoman. We called her the Sitt Miriam.’

*JOURNEY'S END.*

NEARING the journey's end,  
With steadfast gaze fixed on the glowing West,  
He said, ‘ O friend,  
Not until now, approaching life's long rest,  
Have I beheld its beauty to the full,  
Nor known its peace.  
A silence comes, with the long years' increase,  
As after stormy days a lull;  
Never was sunset gold  
And sky and hill, so lovely to behold.’

MAY I. E. DOLPHIN.

## SCENES BEHIND THE ITALIAN FRONT, 1917-18.

BY O. L. RICHMOND.

## I.

THE Italian Press always reported it as *La Nostra Guerra*. It was certainly a war apart ; and none were more sure of this than the English and French soldiers who came to it from the Western Front. There were moments of great stress, great losses were suffered—for a variety of reasons ;—but the day-to-day wear and tear and torture of nerves without possibility of relaxation, the night-long bombing and raiding and the scientific terrors of fire and gas, the weight of a bombardment by the 'heavies' of the latest design—all these things were on so different a scale or so little met with, that men fresh from the Somme or Ypres thought Italy a paradise or a kindergarten, according to the point of view. They had not seen the great Austrian attack through the mountains towards Vicenza, nor the murderous crossings of the Isonzo and the wicked fighting on the untrenchable Carso beyond ; few of them perhaps visualised the line in the high mountain fronts or compared its thermometers with their own. They arrived, practically all of them, in the gloom and weariness after Caporetto ; but the Italian War had given some gallant pages to history before that and had cost the country very many of its best officers and men. But what a paradise the landscape itself seemed after Flanders ! What a generous and lasting sun shone south of the Alps ! So bright was it that G.H.Q. did not at once realise how cold could be the winter nights.

Let me begin some time before their arrival, with a scene or two which is hardly likely to have been described in print. The little provincial capital of Udine is our centre, a town with no ancient beauties to command it, though from the terrace of its dismantled castle a glorious view is unfolded over an apparently flat plain to the mountain barriers of Italy. I arrived on a summer evening of 1917, with one delicious memory of it already in my mind. I had slept there twelve years before in order to take the steam-tram to the

hill town of San Daniele del Friuli, where a manuscript of Propertius lurked. I had a copy of *David Copperfield* on my person as I clattered and wound about the spring fields in my leisurely conveyance ; and the afternoon I spent on a shady slope with Dickens, drinking in a view all the sweeter for the sense that few Englishmen ever behold it. Next day I had journeyed to Vienna *via* Pontebba and Tarvis, and therefore could visualise one narrow section of the Front.

It was sometimes difficult to believe in the reality of the War during my first weeks with the 'Foreign Missions' mess. We lunched and dined, whenever possible, in the open garden, and the only discomfort that weighed upon its most junior officer was that the official language was French, not Italian. Was this in deference to an old-world code of manners, or to a military convention, or were our hosts loth to hear their liquid syllables maltreated as much as international French maltreats the accent of the Guitrys ? One junior tongue wagged the less. But what wickedly good meals we had at hospitable Italy's expense ! No wonder that the Italian Mission to the French was peevish at having to pay its own bills. When the Athenæum in London could provide nothing but dry toast for tea, we were living as at the finest restaurant in pre-war Rome, with a *chef* and a head-waiter from the Ritz. We hardly heard the rumble of guns or the drone of an aeroplane ; we talked against the cicadas. What dashing uniforms we wore ! Our own soft English collars were the scorn of the military nations, and our khaki, though much imitated, lacked the celestial distinction of our French brothers of the table. There was a Roumanian general, a Russian colonel with two subordinates, a Serbian and a Belgian major, a Japanese colonel, who wrote out day by day in a tiny hand a voluminous account of every shot fired and posted it to Tokyo ; the French were constantly three and often four in number, the English usually six. The Americans, who later discovered our attraction and at one time threatened to outnumber the whole Allied contingent of regular feeders, had not as yet penetrated so far south. Imagine us, then, on any golden summer evening, dining on the grass under a pleasantly shabby *palazzo* by the outskirts of Udine ; listen, if you can bear it, to our iniquitous French and our iniquitous Franco-Freudian stories—not the least devastating of which are roared at us by our ever-memorable Ducal host, with his gloriously medieval title, profile, and attitude of mind—of whom nothing but good shall be here in gratitude set down. And

then think of the Western Front in July, 1917. No suffering was permitted at the Foreign Missions mess, not even from inhibitions.

We were the Military Missions to Italian Headquarters, and the British Mission was by this time in two buildings and two sections, Operations and Field Intelligence. There was also an Intelligence Mission in Rome, separate from the Military Attaché and the Embassy. The further increase of isolated or semi-detached 'Missions' after the arrival of our regular forces in Italy caused a good deal of quiet amusement. The great War game of Establishments found an almost virgin field.

Already in July, 1917, there were also present the 'Mission Batteries,' attached to Italian divisions in the line and quite distinct from us. Then there were the various units of the British Red Cross (with George Trevelyan for local figurehead), who put the War in its place by a certain informality of deportment and dress which did not much commend them to H.M. Forces. But their utility and valour were beyond criticism; they saw the battle at much closer quarters than I did, and personally I have to thank them for a blessed week of recuperation just before their Villa Trento was overrun by the enemy.

This brings us to the Ladies, who were of various denominations—all equally prepared to leave their piles of letters to be stamped at our Mission's expense. There was the X-ray contingent with a caravan; there were the canteen ladies at various advanced points, all gallant, some surpassingly beautiful. I hope I may now be forgiven if I confess that once only I made a pilgrimage to the simple shrine of one of these—in the old Ford car of the very White Knight of the Red Cross. Had this been discovered at the time (I refer, of course, to my means of transport) my stay at Udine might have been disciplinarily curtailed. But it was a cribbed and cabined life for the junior officers at that period. My civilian soul greeted with enthusiasm the imposing vision of *The Times* Correspondent drawn up, with car, at our door—a gentleman too vast and with too much humour to attempt concealment in any pseudo-khaki—and actually enquiring for me! I sacrificed the shreds of a military reputation for a rustic dinner at beloved San Daniele del Friuli.

The scene even at Udine was not always so peaceful. One midnight was made hideous by the continuous, if distant, explosions of the whole ammunition train of a brand-new French battery of Creusot guns. We could see the glare miles away in the mountains, and all lit, we understood, by the thoughtless match of an Italian

camion-driver. Soon afterwards an explosion occurred at Udine itself of dimensions satisfying even to connoisseurs. It was just before the Italian offensive on the Bainsizza plateau, which so nearly succeeded in its threat to Trieste. I was sitting at my window at about 11 a.m., when I saw the first crimson funnel-shaped flower rise over the roofs. Then the detonations began. They were certainly awe-inspiring, and continued at frequent intervals from that time till about 2 p.m. Fortunately for our part of the town, the dump which was 'going up' was beyond the station, more than a mile away; but a rumour was started that a train of poison-gas shells was in the station yard, and the wind was blowing thence towards us. The safest place was the open air; and as the result of an official warning, not only private persons but whole institutions sought sanctuary in the Piazza d'Armi, now a shady grove, below the Castle. I was watching the scene there, when from one side came three Madonna-like nuns with some thirty small children in blue printed calico following each; they sat quietly down on the grass in three rings, the nun in the centre of each holding her charges' attention by making them chant and recite. It was a pretty ensample of faith to others. By way of contrast—sufficiently startling but, I hope, not too startling for my readers—from the opposite direction appeared a vision of emerald-green and orange and other shades of flimsy disarray, and, conducted by a staid *carabiniere*, an hysterical, screaming, flowing-haired line of, shall we say? Geishas threw themselves into the crowd, in their terrified release from seclusion suggesting a troop of blowsy Maenads. Dense smoke swept over the town; the din was stupefying. But about this time I was ordered to convey the Mission's archives to a hill ten miles away.

It is no part of my present object to discuss great matters of the War in the field, and what I may have learned of them as an Intelligence Officer I do not feel at liberty to set down. Nor do I propose to criticise any of its greater figures as seen from dim obscurity, nor even to hold up to ridicule, as I could, some of its would-be-great. But there was one familiar personage at Udine to whom his native historians seem likely to do less than justice; and, if not as a junior foreign officer, then as a student of history, I make bold to utter this opinion. Beyond all comparison, the finest soldier who served Italy in the War was General Cadorna. He served her with a religious devotion; without him there could hardly have been an Italian War. I see him walk unassumingly beneath our windows,

any Sunday morning of those summer months, with his Chief of Staff, to Mass, and back again, discussing with little eager gestures the sermon of his favourite *padre*—a small lovable man without a trace of *prepotenza*, and a far truer type of idealistic Italy than some that have since been preferred to him.

## II.

From the tragical end of September, 1917, to the beginning of February, 1918, our Mission was housed at Padua, in the *palazzo* actually next to the apse of Sant' Antonio's glorious church. October was an anxious month, as all who were behind the scenes will well remember, and General Lord Plumer's laconic part in the decisions of those days is known to those whom it concerns. It may not have been recorded how steadying was the effect in North Italy of the mere appearance of our seasoned Divisions upon the roads leading from Mantua. Our Ducal host (he was but one of four, but I cannot think of our Mess without him) came to me one evening with a new fire in his eyes, with the cloud lifted from his naturally so cheerful brow. 'I have seen the English *horses*!' This was a famous judge of a horse, who had often visited the Dublin Show. The Italian horses were withering away for want of proper provender; and here in the darkest hour were our gallant battery horses, enormous, faultlessly groomed, with calmly statuesque riders and drivers scarcely blinking an eye as they swung through the little panic-stricken townships and villages. There, too, a horse was known when he appeared, and made his full impression.

Other great horses had adventures then. One night at about this time I saw men working with flares outside the west end of our church of Sant' Antonio. They seemed to be sawing through the lead that held the hoofs of Gattamelata's mighty war-horse to its pedestal; and looking up, I was astonished to discover that the imperious Gattamelata was gone. I found him prone upon the pavement, with the great spike under his seat which had so long and so firmly held him in his saddle. By the morning horse and rider were moving in crates towards the Apennines, whither Titian's Coronation of the Virgin was also wending its way from Venice, adored by the awe-struck villagers as it passed. I suppose it was the constant bombing of Padua and the mercy reserved for Venice, which caused Donatello's horse to march so long before that of

Verrocchio and Leopardi. For on Christmas Day Colleoni's horse was still on its pedestal by San Giovanni e Paolo. But where was Colleoni? He was lying sideways in an open barge below the Piazza, with no guard over him and with planks inviting approach. The little children of the quarter were playing Follow my Leader round and round his corpse.

The almost nightly bombing of the open town of Padua, however well deserved in view of the establishment there of no less than three head-quarters, was a serious business; and, needless to say, was carried out by a German bombing squadron with none of the Austrians' gentlemanly inhibitions. The first night of their appearance happened to be that of the untimely visit to our Front of a delegation of Chinese military and naval officers. Our harried hosts had found them difficult to entertain between the courses, and we had hardly adjourned to smoke when the shattering noise of large low-flying enemy planes was heard, followed almost at once by a tremendous explosion close by. It was remarkable how few seconds it took the Occidentals to sort themselves from the Orientals, as if some unanimous instinct taught them to enter the next world so far as possible homogeneous in colour. But it was no less remarkable how far the Occidentals were from the row of high French windows, through which the Chinese visitors still gazed in impassive curiosity, with the industrious Japanese colonel, as always, on the *qui vive* for copy. So badly damaged was the *palazzo*, though two bombs fell luckily in the corner of the garden, that we moved our quarters next day. The first bomb of all had hit the dome of the Carmini Church, by the bridge on the northward road; and, as we came out after our ordeal, the flames were licking round the Cross and reddening the canal and the whole region of the city. Across the bridge and past the blazing dome the scared population were pouring into the open country, where many of them continued to sleep for months afterwards.

From Padua the unhappy Russians faded out, the colonel to join the Serbian army; they were replaced by the Americans, at first in modest force, and with a cheerful Etonian as their adjutant. The Prince of Wales, symbol of Allied stability, passed through, and even addressed in the dark one sentence to myself. British G.H.Q. was bombed and the sentry killed at the door. There was a general move of Head-quarters and Missions towards the healthier Euganean Hills.

But my last impression of Padua was of more thrilling import

than any of these. One day some weeks after the Armistice the Allied officers were invited to be present on the King of Italy's tribune, set up in the Arena where the main road passes it. Suddenly, from the far end of the vast oval Piazza—where the huge Church of Sta. Giustina was hidden from us by the trees of the central garden—a low hum arose, which swelled into a rich bass note in unison, and rising, became a solemn hymn, and was caught up by many thousands of unseen voices. I remember it as unaccompanied by any band. Never has music more stirred my soul; never shall I hear its like again. It came slowly nearer and nearer, until the head of a column of soldiers halted before the King, and all was silent. He addressed them, bade them God-speed. They were the Czechs. Two divisions had been formed voluntarily from the Czech prisoners in Italy; and now they were on their way to their recovered land, units of the national army of a new nation. They moved on, and each battalion, when it had passed the saluting base, broke into singing once more. I do not know the notes of their national hymn, but they ring yet upon my heart-strings—low and slow, then sad and strong, and rising to the heights.

### III.

Our own Mission moved to two villas at Tramonte, near Praglia, which I had been partly instrumental in choosing for us; but, as I departed for a fortnight's leave just then, it was no surprise to find on my return that the bedroom assigned to me had nothing in it but a bedstead and some fifty picture frames turned to the walls. When I turned them about, I was amused to see that they contained a fairly complete set of the original Piranesi engravings of Rome, which my brother officers had stripped from the passages and stacked in there as lumber. I noticed that, after I had decorated my own room, the pile was gradually dwindling again. We lived from now onwards in comfort and in greater freedom, but with a constantly increasing 'establishment.' In our off hours we paid visits to a number of 'Schools,' no less comfortably established in the greater houses of the Euganean Hills; found out our Red Cross friends once more, this time with a reedy lake at their back door, in which Geoffrey Young, gloriously bereft of a leg, performed feats unattainable by the tadpole; went to Este and Petrarch's garden at Arquà, to Sirmione, which Catullus would hardly have recognised as a Home of Rest for the *ultimi Britanni*; to Vicenza, the French

head-quarters, and the villas near; to Verona—and even to the Front. In the Euganean country

‘the hills are crumpled plains, the plains *parterres*,’

as Elizabeth Browning said scornfully of England. When urging one of our soldier clerks to walk out and see something of it, I was met with a blank look and the remark: ‘I don’t call this scenery, sir; you see, I come from Chirk.’ But in fact the patriarchal and frugal peasant life about us, and the Spanish-chestnut woods, and the wide views from the heights, might have stung to delight a less patriotic Briton. And we were living thus and eating the lotus, while 1918 was deciding in blood the fate of the world. There were but two serious battles on our Front during the year, the Austrian attack of June on the Piave and Asiago lines, and the Allied attack of October, which brought about the Armistice of November 3rd. The Austrian attack across the Piave reckoned without our British aeroplanes, which constantly destroyed every bridge by which the shock-troops could be supplied from the rear. On the other hand, the British up at Asiago were attacked at an indefensible point in their line, and in spite of the certain warning we sent them of the hour of attack, lost early in the day a lot of prisoners and one 18-pounder. The position was, however, quickly restored. . . . But I had undertaken not to touch upon high matters of war; and it is only as a student of history that I feel bound to express my astonishment that General Diaz’ despatch on the October battle (known in Italy by the name of Vittorio Veneto, to which point an Italian force penetrated), has been inscribed upon the wall of St. Mark’s at Venice, by the entrance to the Doge’s Palace, without critical emendation of its terms. No one in Allied Countries who understood the difficulties faced and overcome would ever dream of belittling the Italian effort in the last year of the War. But when General Diaz claimed to have defeated the enemy *senza aiuto*, ‘without assistance,’ he was challenging what might be a crushing retort. Those of us who were present or reporting events in their sequence know who made the bridges over which our Allies passed the Piave, know what divisions of the combined forces were used as spearheads for the thrust both there and on the Asiago plateau, know what commander in the field held the whole scheme together, know finally whose blood was then shed most freely in the common cause. Not so would a Cadorna have written of his friends. It was in Cadorna’s time that the little boys in village

homes were being christened Firmato, after the signature of the daily bulletin '*Firmato : Cadorna*.' But even then—for I recall the words as spoken at Udine—an officer of one of the smaller nations could say to me: 'These Italians will not be a great nation till, like you, they can call a spade a spade.' I mention this because I know Italy to be a great, and a generous, nation, and because this is the sort of slight which friends find it hardest to forgive or to forget. After the lapse of more than a decade I venture to raise my quite unofficial voice.

There are one or two pictures still in my mind which belong to the Tramonte period. One is of Mr. Wickham Steed, and his delegation, arriving to win the War by propaganda, at a time when our Mission had long been exploring that avenue and knew its limitations. Having now read the claims of Mr. Steed in the second volume of his excellent book, I must still continue to attribute some share of the victory to the fighting men. It was not much good to fire pamphlets by rocket over the trenches of a Czech division, if the artillery behind that division was Hungarian or Austrian to a man, and prepared, if need be, to fire upon their infantry. In fact, a Czech division fought very gallantly against us in the June battle on the Piave. It was not the Czechs and Jugo-Slavs who first melted from the battle front in October, but the Hungarian divisions—who made for home and blocked the roads and passes. Nothing compelled them but the rout before Conegliano, the defeat of Germany, the fear of encirclement, and the call to defend their native territory.

My second picture will show again why the Czechs could not help us much until they became prisoners of war. Some of us had been taken by the Italians in the summer of 1918 to Monte Altissimo, between the Adige valley and Lago di Garda, to overlook the lines. We could see Arco at the head of the lake, and in a field by the lakeside the telescope showed us a human figure apparently crucified. From the lines the whole transaction had been observed. A Czech had been led out bound, and there fastened up and let us hope, shot . . . *pour encourager les autres*.

Another might be of myself painfully ascending to the mountain lines near Monte Pasubio by *teleferica*, clasped in the arms of a less giddy adventurer, with apparently two inches of wood on a wire between me and a bottomless gorge. But I should prefer to describe, if I could, the only Fourth of June dinner which Etonians are likely ever to hold on an Italian Front under a G.O.C. of their own. I was ordered by that G.O.C. to compose a Latin telegram

for Eton, but begged that one in Italian should rather be sent, since three of our number were Italian-born ; and this, I believe, was done.

But actually it is time I indicated the normal tenor of a summer's day at Praglia. It might begin with a wallow in a tepid, canalised stream, in company perhaps with Julian Huxley. After breakfast in the upper villa one descended to the lower containing the offices, and in summer was glad that the Intelligence section was housed in a sunless ground-floor room. Our clerks worked below us, the cipher officers above us, as also our chief of those days and all the Operations section. I think that we knew as much about the Austro-Hungarian army as was good for it, and that our daily telegrams to the War Office very seldom led to false inferences. If there was any point in doubt, I would usually myself walk by the shadeless field-paths in the afternoon to Abano, the ancient sulphur Spa whose hotels the Italian Head-quarters had taken over. Or if it was the Third Army one must interrogate, one drove off to Mogliano near Mestre. (And sometimes one could make this visit late enough to combine it with *al fresco* supper at *La Favorita*, a wayside tavern whose charm was bound up with the beauty of its three daughters.) Occasionally the Fourth or First Army would compare notes with us, and each Army had one or more really brilliant men among its Intelligence officers. Perhaps there would be a football match in the evening. We had a mixed Anglo-Italian team, with Stocchi the chauffeur at centre forward, and myself attempting to combine a too middle-aged captaincy with the duty of referee in two languages. This in July, on the plain. Alas, for poor Stocchi ! He fell a victim with several others to the influenza scourge that swept over us also after the Armistice and decimated the villages round. I had to see him nailed into his coffin and certified, and then to walk behind it to the grave. '*Sotto, Stocchi!*', our football cry of encouragement, took on an ironic meaning. Then we would dine, if we had not already lunched, at the Foreign Missions mess, away in Padua—otherwise, lazily *al fresco* in front of the upper villa ; and there were various ways of filling up the evening hours. Bridge, of course ; or stories of the romantic youth of our Italian *liaison* officer (who asserted that he had spent a year of a supposed University career in a cottage on the sea-shore, not unaccompanied, and had passed his examination without missing a daylight hour of sport). I best remember wandering alone by moonlight on the hills behind us, especially to a thicket beloved by a nightingale,

whose song seemed to swell against the challenge of the frogs far below.

#### IV.

The Front has become the 'Armistice line.' Italy has expanded in a night. My car (for I am by now a responsible Captain) fought its way to Trento against the seemingly endless stream of southward-surfing prisoners on foot. We needed repairs on our return journey in the dark, and I walked down to contemplate the cold but now Latin waves of the Adige below the road. The tramp of the prisoners continued, and most of them sang lustily, though they had their backs to home, and cheered all who passed. Suddenly I heard Italian voices chanting a refrain. They were a company or two of *Triestini*, who had spent all these years in the Austrian ranks. A mad war! But how was a mad peace to be avoided in the then state of human passions? Our Italian hosts took me soon after the Armistice upon a series of tours which eventually covered almost the whole line to which the troops had advanced. I was thus enabled to study the problem of the new frontier at close quarters, an advantage that had not been shared by many of those in London and Paris who eventually decided it. Though almost eleven years have passed, my views on certain points which then caused bitter debate, may possibly be worth a hearing.

But first I have some scenes to record.

We have driven into Botzen, passing half-way from Trento, the linguistic frontier beyond which *Osteria* has changed to *Gasthaus*. (You will notice that I speak instinctively of Trento, not Trient, of Botzen, not Bolzano; but no hasty inference need be drawn.) The day is past when the Italian and Austro-Hungarian staffs shared the same Head-quarters building and the Italians could speak to Berlin on the enemy's telephone. There are no prisoners on any of the roads now; they have been shepherded into the region of Verona, only too thankful for Allied *macaroni*. But every mile or so up the main road northwards to the Brenner are heavy guns or howitzers abandoned in flight. Botzen would appear to be normally, if quietly, occupied in its own affairs, unless one penetrated into the houses. Then one would discover that the large *café* in the Square is almost the only place still able to keep warm; and this is already a bitterly cold winter. After dinner at the best hotel our international group of officers (we filled two cars) proceeds to the Municipal Theatre, where a comedy is being performed. We are

late, and slip into the back of various boxes. My companion is a very young American. Two or three prominent boxes are reserved for Italian officers ; there is a sprinkling of soldiers. The natives never turn an eye to any of them. In the intervals it is the same ; the foreigners might not be there, for any notice they get as they perambulate the *foyer* among the crowd. At the end of the play we stand outside our box and watch the natives departing. My companion makes a gesture as to put on his overcoat. Instantly half a dozen natives rush up to him to help him on with it, and only leave him with profuse gestures of courtesy. *Wilson!*

The next day—and oh ! how cold it was !—we drove by Meran to the bare lakes at the sources of the Adige. In the gaudily painted little summer-holiday home of some sentimental Austrian family we clink our spurs and lunch as victors. Beyond the house the road begins to drop towards the north ; a trickle of water begins to accompany it through the alp. That trickle is bound for the *Black Sea*. It will reach the Inn, and so the Danube. A frontier indeed !

Returning to Botzen, I sit by myself in the before-mentioned precious warmth of the *café*. A lady walks across to me, speaking perfect English. May she introduce her husband the Count ? He speaks poor English, but with greater volubility. Has anything more insufferable than his present position been known in history ? He is actually forbidden to leave Botzen without a permit from the Italians. Now I have noticed no display of force, and indeed much easy fraternisation of the common soldiers with the native peasantry ; so I draw on the Count and one or two of his acquaintances, who join us. When they have thoroughly aired their grievances, I begin my answer with a question. Has any of them been to Feltre or Belluno or to any part of Friuli since the Austrians and Germans occupied these areas ? No. Let them understand, then, that while Botzen leads an almost normal life under Italian occupation, while no requisitions whatever have been made, the inhabitants of all those areas have starved for a whole year, their possessions have been stripped absolutely bare, their houses have been dismantled *down to the very window-frames*, and now bitter winter is upon them. I went further, further than after eleven years there is any need to go, in enlightening them upon Austro-German methods of warfare, and left them pained and very much surprised.

The Teutonic picturesqueness of Brixen and Sterzing brightened an icily cold journey to the Brenner and thence along the Pusterthal to Toblach. (In Sterzing I bought the last china pipe figuring on

its bowl the Emperors William and Joseph under the text *Gott mit Uns.*) At Toblach it was easy to perceive that, if the frontier of Italy was to be decided on grounds of military security and was for the future to cross the Drave valley from north to south, it must cross at a point *east* of the watershed of Toblach, and east of *Innichen*, where a road of strategic importance debouches, coming *via* Sexten from the upper Piave valley. If Innichen were in enemy hands and the Sexten range of mountains behind it, the road and railway from Cortina to Toblach and the Pusterthal could be closed by a few guns and the Dolomite area sealed up altogether. I reported in this sense, and saw my note on the subject pass *verbatim* into official documents for the Peace Conference; and Sexten is Italian to-day—though probably not because of me. But though as an officer I was of this opinion, there are reservations which as a civilian I shall make about frontiers later on.

Deeply interesting though these travels were at the time, I do not propose to trace them in detail; even the glittering panoramas of the Dolomites in frosty morning sun and in sunset of orange and mauve must go unsung. I was soon on a tour to more debatable lands, the frontier region near Fiume and Monte Nevoso, as the Italians call the last range of the Istrian mountains. We diverged to explore the desolate Carso, on which even with a map certain villages could no more be found. On an escarpment east of the cruel crossing of the Isonzo, above some burials too rough to be still complete, was a rough-hewn monument with so chivalrous an inscription that I have carried it ever since in my head:

*Su questa cima  
Italiani ed Ungaresi combattenti da prodi  
s'affrellarono nella morte.*

[A translation of which is :

Upon this height  
Italian and Hungarian each with other  
Like heroes fought their fight,  
And in their death lay brother beside brother.

Or again :

*Iliada hoc scopulo sic Dacus, ut Italus, egit:  
frater et alterius mortuus alter erat.]*

But this was composed by some fighting man, and the strife of Hungarian and Italian had become a political wrangle between a

victorious Italian and a problematic Jugo-Slav, who might be more of a Croat than a Serb. D'Annunzio and his braves had not yet descended upon Fiume; a British warship lay beside an Italian in the harbour. But an Italian officer was our host at the Hungarian Governor's Palace, where the Italian colony in full force attended a reception and dance. A sky-sign on the main quay wrote *Viva Fiume Italiano* across the night, and apparently casual civilians of all ages accosted one with apparently impromptu propaganda.

But acquaintance with the geography and communications of this region made me as entirely hostile to the idea of severing Fiume from new-born Jugo-Slavia as I was reconciled to the taking of Innichen and Sexten from Austria; and for much the same reasons. Fiume is definitely, if only by a few miles, beyond the natural mountain boundaries of Istria; its direct communications are with the eastern and northern hinterland; and Serbia was our ally. Not without reason did Russia, as a Slav state, veto the granting of Fiume to Italy under the Treaty of London. And in time of war Fiume could be most easily blockaded and overlooked from Istria, while in normal times its trade *must* be with its own hinterland. A mixture of misguided patriotism and groundless fear must have been the reason why the Italian section of the population wished to commit *hari-kari* as they did. Once Fiume was Italian (and hemmed round with a tariff wall), it seemed to me, it would become a flower without a stalk, and die of lack of sustenance from its native soil. The outlook for Trieste *vis-à-vis* to Venice was serious enough, without denying a natural development to *both* the great ports of the North Adriatic which served the countries of Central Europe. Extraordinary expedients were suggested, when the common-sense view was stated to Italians, such as, that the Jugo-Slavs could make a new port a few miles to the south, or at Zengg, by building a new railway. But it was easy to answer that if they came to have a choice of a national or an Italian port they would assuredly boycott the Italian one.

The obvious solution of the whole problem was one which before the birth of the League of Nations could have found no sponsor. It was to 'internationalise' both Trieste and Fiume, and to give Germany and Austria and Czechoslovakia quays and rights of their own at Trieste, and Austria and Jugo-Slavia and Hungary quays and rights of their own at Fiume. This could have been done even under the Italian flag. For the use of the necessary railways, only short stretches of which lie within the natural borders of Italy, an

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international agreement could have been framed. It would have been enormously to the advantage of Italy, to see these ports flourishing without restriction ; and, as before, Italians would have largely manned the Merchant Marine of their rivals and filled the offices of their maritime firms.

Unfortunately the catchwords at this moment were : '*Parte integrale del Regno.*' It had simply not occurred to myself, as I traversed those so evidently Tyrolese and Slovene areas, that methods would be pursued, after a Peace based ostensibly upon Wilson's Fourteen Points, so alien to Anglo-Saxon sentiment as some of those which appear to have been pursued in fact. A specially distinctive 'culture' marks the Southern Tyrol. I had imagined an Italian frontier force on the Alps and Italian control of the communications and posts sufficient to ensure security from any attack ; then, within the Kingdom of Italy, a self-contained and liberally befriended Province of Tyrol, self-governing in its civil institutions, but pledged not to encourage irredentism.

With this conception in one's mind, one could freely accept that Alpine frontier ; for Italy has suffered bitterly through the ages from the spearhead held to her throat. '*Trento e Trieste*' was a cry as old as the Risorgimento ; and in those mountain valleys beyond them the races could have been left to find their own levels peacefully as in Switzerland. Perhaps I have said too much, but it has been said sincerely, and not without understanding sympathy for my Italian hosts, faced with conditions unexpectedly favourable for an imperialistic advance and intoxicated with the strong wine of victory. I set down my ideas of eleven years ago, and those who have studied these regions as they are now will know better than I how far they were justified at the time.<sup>1</sup>

On our return from Fiume we stayed an hour at Udine. I had not the heart to revisit the scene of my daily walk in the summer of '17, the poplar-lined bank of the straight *Roggia di Palma*, the mill and the maize-fields, and the farm where lived a friendly family of little children. I dreaded to see those children's pinched accusing faces. But an amazing sight met us in the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele—two high masts in the Venetian manner, with enormous banners flying, one the proud flag of Italy, and the other . . . *The Stars and Stripes!*

The further westward we drove the more Fiat lorries we passed decked out with the Stars and Stripes. Here was a bloodless victory

<sup>1</sup> See note at end.

of push and propaganda, quite justifying the presence of one battalion of the American Army in Italy. It had arrived about two days before our Armistice, with the intention, as some of its officers explained to me on the map, of thrusting at the Germans through Bavaria. It was hurried to the bridge over, I think, the Tagliamento, in lorries lent by the British ; and, as soon as it had captured one unarmed Austrian straggler from the flight, the hour of the Armistice was allowed to strike. It is only that monstrous banner at Udine which stirs me to record so trivial a detail. There had been some other Allies in that war. And not so very long afterwards Wilson and his flags had also exhausted the gratitude of his too sanguine Italian clientele.

. . . . Three years later, two Italians who had been fellow Intelligence Officers and knew my loyalty to Italian ideals in so far as they seemed to me just, were dining with me in Rome, and dared to speak *to me* of *il gran tradimento*. This was their description of British policy towards Italy. I was too proud to argue with them ; and as one was a native of Fiume it would have been futile. But let me not end on this note. We in England should never forget that, if Italy had remained neutral in the War, it might have ended differently, or at the best it must have been considerably prolonged. In fighting her own fight she was most certainly fighting ours. Disagreement about details must not, indeed *does* not, cool the warmth of our own gratitude ; and an Italy guarded by the Alps and the Mediterranean will fulfil, stage by stage, her liberal destiny.

NOTE.—I may be permitted to quote from a letter from Miss Beatrice Marshall to *The Times* in October, 1929 :

'Trade in Fiume is stagnant ; its splendid port, which before the War was one of the busiest on the Adriatic, is now a desolation of closed warehouses and workmen who lie half the day stretched out asleep on the quay. On the other hand, the docks of Sušak, Fiume's Yugoslavian next-door neighbour, are full of life. Big foreign ships sail in and out and there is every sign of rapidly increasing trade and advancing prosperity.'

For the history of the idea of Fiume's annexation to Italy, see *Storia del Comune di Fiume*, by Silvino Gigante ; and the review in *The Times Literary Supplement* for December 19th, 1929.

## ON LIVING IN LINCOLN'S INN.

BY MARGARET ASHWORTH.

## I.

I AM that unpleasant person, a cheerful early riser, and often wake when the bells of Temple Bar are sounding, undisturbed, an hour that lies within the liberty of sleep. There are still two circles to run before the finger on my hidden clock may warn me of the day's stern beginning. When I was a child these were hours of adventure: an island of one's own in the middle of a lake; they seem not unlike it still.

In the year's round, dusky mornings are the happiest to rise early in, when a south-west wind is driving river scents up the shelving Thames bank. The lamps in Stone Buildings court are making a pattern on my wall or may be just put out. I can step to the level of the balustrade and see St. Paul's like an old woman in a shawl crouched dimly in the rain or humped against the breaking sky. There is about me the murmurous calm which passes for silence in a great city and can bear at that early hour certain sounds and still be silence: the swish of branches and birds awakening in the dim garden, doves roo-hooing about the chapel walls, the horn of a boat. As I wander from room to room the world takes form about me. Then I must be at the garden window again, spying out the ancient high walk through leafless trees, or in summer watching the shadows creep along the sward. At such moments I must always feel a debt unpayable to past and present in Lincoln's Inn.

According to their temper, people are attracted or repelled by the fortress-like enclosure of the Stone Building walls. I had chambers in an upper floor, and only after I had left that house for one in the square did I find from chance reading that my true address had been *The Fourth Attic in the Stone Building*. If ever a benevolent fate should redirect my steps thither, I shall have note-paper ready. At what date, by what error the Stone Building changed its name, adding a letter and losing a grace, I have not been able to find.

There is an aloofness to be felt in those balustraded chambers

that dwellers in other parts of the Inn cannot know. The world is far away, down some eighty-eight steps. Light enters the broad rooms through a frieze of glass set high in the wall, so high that you must have a gallery built, and steps, to take you to the pane. It is a lodging for book-men upon whose peace only the birds and the stars can spy. You may sport many an oak; there are two doors to each opening in the main walls, one on either face; whatever extreme of weather may assault one side of the house you are saved from it on the other by this barricade. If the Stone Building had been planned in an earlier century I might have suspected the Benchers of contriving a number of Little Eases for the young gentlemen of the Inn whose conduct at times was such as to be 'utterly disliked.'

The Fourth Attic gave me a bitter welcome eleven years ago, and but for an hour's grace might have watched me die. I was left sound, and the Stone Building scarred and pitted as by a pox, with marks to be carried while Lincoln's Inn endures. It happened that I took possession of the chambers on a certain December day whose history is told in a tablet on the Inns of Court School of Arms, opposite my door. Dusk fell on me looking forlornly about the unfamiliar rooms where boxes and cases stood unpacked and a bed was not yet set up. To the door then, a welcome first-footer in a new home, came one of my kin who had but that day landed in the Thames Estuary, closing a perilous journey, in that after five attempts he had escaped from an enemy war camp and was here to tell the tale.

We left my chambers in disarray and went out through the dark streets to eat and drink and be merry. The raid warning came and found us indifferent. We talked the guns down, talked the moon another two hours' journey across the sky, talked till the restaurant put us to the door. On our way back to the Inn the raid began again. There were plenty of bombs falling and guns crashing, and shrapnel pattering freely about as we ran across the open space of the Fields to the west gate of the Inn. By some error it was closed and the postern gate locked. From a policeman standing under shelter of the coping I learned that a bomb had fallen in the Stone Buildings court, 'outside number four and five.' No one was hurt, all the residents being in the dug-out. In a lull of the firing one man helped another over the gate wall and drew the bolt.

As we rounded the chapel corner our feet were in a flood.

The bomb had ploughed down into the water main, and Stone Buildings court seemed like a heaped seashore. Over masses of débris we crawled and gained the sorry shelter of the house, where stairs were strewn with shattered windows and frames and masonry ; all the doors had sprung open, black entries yawned on us as we climbed. My own floors were thick with glass and wood. We groped for candles and I shuddered as I looked about. Glass had been hurled in long darts across a room of twenty-five feet, and, at a height level with my head, lay deeply embedded in walls and doors.

A few of these darts were left there as relics. Dust lodged on them till presently they looked like tenpenny nails. Each successive raid shook more splinters out ; to the end of the war there would be fine glass in the dust-pan. Some months passed before a London glazier could be found to attend to such a trifling matter as my attic panes. During that time the windows were boarded up, with holes cut for light and air.

There is probably a record of this and other raids affecting the Inn stored in the archives of the Honourable Society, and told, I do not doubt, in decorous and restrained speech, not unlike the manner in which the 'Seidge of Bollan' was set down almost four hundred years ago. That little story, called a memorandum, told how the king set out

'and wt certeyne shippes saylled over the See wt a prousperous passage, and shortly landyd at his Towne of Calye, and therhens to invade the realme of Fraunce . . . which seage, being begon the XIX day of July the said yere (1544) was continued unto the xj day of Septembre nexe folowying, being a Thurdysday . . . (when the enemy) were content to yelde upp the Towne (Boulogne) to the kyng, and so they dyd. The walls thereof being very sore batryd and the howses wt in all to torne wt gonne, that there was, I thynke, not a hole howse in the Towne.'

## II.

Someone with time to spare and an unmalicious pen should some day write a little book on 'The Yell Dedes' of the gentlemen who formed the Honourable and Worshipful Society of Lincoln's Inn. It would make a volume of the kind reviewers are fond of describing as a human document : very human. I myself belonging to the sex called frail, and predestined to falter in the narrow way, found comfort in seeing how often the strong ones went

wandering out along 'the lily leven.' Not that I am suggesting the Masters of the Bench could err: the idea alone is disquieting; and I was shocked to find that an Auncyent Utter Barrester, whose title would convey that he is hoary in rectitude, could need a downright scolding. It was the ordinary members of the Inn who brightened many a dull page. So far as my reading has shown me, only one of the Worshipful Masters of the Bench, in the five hundred years of their revealed history, has ever done anything wrong. That was a Mr. Sellwyn who in 1624 was severely rebuked because he had privately 'farmed or lett forth' his chamber.

I came on the trail of these lovable weaknesses when I was trying to find what happened in the northern area of the Inn before the Stone Building threw up its gaunt reef there. It had been a garden, I found, since time out of mind, since long before that day in a year about 1420 when the 'Howse of Lincoln's Inn' became tenants of the descendants of Ralph Neville, Bishop of Chichester, Chancellor of England. Bishop Neville died here in 1244. As I write, I look out on the walls that rose, within a century of the Society's coming, on the old palace site by the Chauncelaire Lane. The Benchers had to begin almost at once to repair the ragged place, and left the gardens and fields alone, acting well except perhaps in the matter of the Coney Garthe. The garden, I found, they rented from the bishop's neighbours—a medieval foundation—for 9s. a year and underlet to their cook for 13s. 4d.

The Coney Garthe or Backside was a long strip of waste land lying west of the garden and house, divided from 'The Feildes' by a ditch and a hedge of thorn. A curious eye might find that boundary now in a line drawn roughly from the 'Turing Picke' (Great Turnstile) in Holborn down to Carey Street. It must have been a departure from the Benchers' usual wisdom to expect the younger members of the Worshipful Society to keep their hands off rabbits in idle hours. The Masters did what they could so far as rule-making went, and as the years went by they cared for their property in the way of all good husbandmen. The development of the Coney Garthe to the present high garden would make a pretty story, paragraphed in generations. Orders come from the Bench from time to time—money for 'one lode of thornys for the Coningrey hedge'; request that 'a faire and bewtyfull wall shalbe made on the backside'; 'the pannier man shall have

yearly Xs in recompense of the fedinge of the Conygard and also shall have the grass there to be mowen only'; 'the ditches about the Coningree shall in convenient time be drayned and kept drie.'

No matter what trouble the Society took with their land the rabbits were a trial; no matter what laws they made, the preserve was violated. They said that no one was to carry a bow bent or let off arrows in the Coney Garthe. The firm decree is passed that the members 'should do no more shute in gonnys.' One John Williams is paid 10s. a year for taking care of the conyes. He is given a whelebaroo, I noticed. The Benchers plant elms in the Coney Garthe and make a path where it would appear that the lawyers could walk by day and the rabbits by night. And still the coneys are preyed upon. Then, after a century and a half of gamekeeping, the Masters of the Bench make a gallant reparation. At a council held on June 24, 1572, eight Benchers present, 'It shalbe lawful from hensefore for any man to destroy the Conyes in the bakeside; and in consideracion thereof the gentlemen shall have on the huntynge nyght a couple of conyes in a messe.' Alas that no one should have recorded the comments made when that notice was posted on the screen in Hall!

Soon afterwards the ancient rabbit warren became a standing brick-kiln and yard for the use of the Inn, and when the building years were over, a laid-out garden. Then the high walk was made, shaded by trees, flanked by the long flower-bed, that is now an especial delight to dwellers in certain parts of the Stone Building.

Thus, bounded on the west by the Coney Garthe and The Feildes, on north and east by a garden which presently threw out 'the wall called the mudde wall' (daub thatched with reeds) against curious eyes in the Chauncelair Lane, on the south by Fickett's Croft where the Knights Templars jousted, the Honourable and Worshipful Society set up newly their medieval college of law. They dwelt for centuries in a tangle of boundaries, rents, and exemptions which must have given some exercise to their legal minds. Until the London Government Act of 1899 freed them, they had to answer to four parishes—St. Andrew's Holborn, St. Giles in the Fields, St. Clement Danes, and the Liberty of the Rolls.

The Masters of the Bench could not have guessed at the joy they were storing up for a later generation when they began in 1422 to write down in a black book the records of their little council

meetings. I can see the man with the quill taking down the minutes, no more 'comformabyll' in his spelling than some of the members of the Worshipful Society were in their behaviour. He was content to write a name as it sounded, and having established its identity, felt no scruple in spelling it several ways in the course of one report. He had a faithful ear and took no account of anyone having a cold in the head ; so that when he was told to write that a member had used obbrobrios wordes he set it down so, and when he was told that Mr. Indicho Johnes was to build the new chappyll, he set it down so.

It was made clear from the earliest that Lincoln's Inn was a place where one must behave—or try to—as I was told when I was permitted to take up residence in the Fourth Attic. Judging from the first two centuries of their overlordship, the Benchers had a stormy time of it, making one behave. They possessed only two weapons—moral counsel and fines ; as a desperate measure there was expulsion from the House. The stocks were mended once or twice, it is true, and then not mentioned again, and in any case, one set of stocks does not go far.

A scale of punishment fines was set up in multiples of ten pence, the standard of offence varying from idle naughtiness, neglect of work, 'cheeking' the Bench, concerted practical jokes, to attempts at murdering the 'Cheife Butler.' The Cheife Butler never knew when a dagger or a stave was going to be thrown at him. As late as 1627 (when the pence had changed to shillings and pounds) an Utter Barrester was fined £10 'for striking Kelwaye Guidot, the Cheife Butler, in his chamber and breakynge of his head.' That Utter Barrester had had a timely warning. Not so long before he smote the butler a serious note appears in the books. Mr. Johnson,

'one of the gentlemen of the Howse, is expulsed the Society because he hath in the backsyde of this Howse stroken and beaten George Lutwych the Cheife Butler with a cudgell whereby one of his ribbes was broken, which misdemeanour and ill example ys not sufferable yn the governement of this Howse.'

It would be a pretty task for someone who is good at his sums to reckon up the fines levied by the Bench in five hundred years, and the fines paid. A present-day reader of the Black Books, with a mind properly set as to authority, is dismayed to find that gentlemen who must have been crushed by the disgrace

of a heavy fine did not at once out with the purse. The Society reckon up their losses now and again. In 1618 the Cheife Butler is bidden to count 'all fines and forfeitures peines and penalties oweing to this Howse for tenne yeaeres last past.' That was when Mr. Indicho Johnes was laying plans for the new chappyll.

It was an odd position that the Masters of the Bench held in those early centuries; they seem to have been a mixture of schoolmaster, gaoler and matron in a girls' school. The young men are hectored about their toilet: they must be decorously clad and not with their shirts in public view beyond the doublet at the neck. They get smacked for stealing quince pies out of the oven, swans and 'buks' from the larder, for not coming into Hall when the horn is blown for dinner. They are to be seen and not heard at meal times, are forbidden to bang their mugs about, or that unhappy Cheife Butler will be sent from the high table and call on them to 'cesse their hygh speiche and leve knockynge on the pottes.' They are not to play ball to the breaking of the hall windows, or throw a dish of butter at the steward, or snatch a dish of fish from him. A good many fines went into the money box in defiance of these rules. The Benchers must have grown rich during the battle of the beards, and when they were dealing with insubordinate barristers like one Mennell, who was

'neclygent and toke lytell study in his laste moote, and was not conformabill to the saying and order of the Benche in his lernyng and motyng, but presumtiosly seyd to the Benche that they coude not bryng in the lernyng better than it was brought in.' . . .

As for the beards—

'1542. Mr. Germyn, oon of the felawship . . . shall before the xij day of this instant moneth of November shave of his berde and afterward to kepe the same in lyke sorte.'

'1554. From Sonday next comyng, no Felowe of this Howse shall weare a berde uppon paine of every man that shall do the contrary to be putte owte of commons and to forfeit for every meale that he or they having a berde shall take, xijd., to be paid before he be remytted into commons.'

From fines levied on Ascension Day, 1555 :

'Mr. Wyde fined 20d. for his goyng in his study gowne in Chep-syde on a Sonday abowt x of the clock before none . . .

'Mr. Downes fined 40d. He toke upon hym at the Benche to be

prolocutor for all the gentylmen of the Howse . . . when the order of the Justices was declared unto them to cutt of ther berdes.

‘Mr. Myddleton fined 20*d.* for his overmuch speakynge at the Benche in defence of weryng of berdes.

‘Mr. John Haydon fined 40*d.* for striking Mr. Iveyey a blowe on the mouthe . . .

‘November 1559. All orders hertofore made in the Howse touchynge berdes shalbe void and repealid.’

Thus it appears that the Masters of the Bench could at last put up their swords on the subject of beards. But they had little peace, soon had to deal with long hair and ruffs, poniards and buckles. They were oddly particular about dress. Two years after Mr. Wyde went out so indiscreetly robed, a definite rule was made that ‘no man should wear his studie gown out of the lymyt of the Howse any farther than to Flet Brigge or Holbourne Brigge or to Sovoye.’

There was no doubt that with one thing and another the Benchers had their hands full. They could never be sure when a practical joke was brewing. On one terrible day a lampoon was found posted in Hall. A number of the likeliest members of the Inn were singled out as culprits, bidden lay their hands on their hearts and answer some awful and searching questions beginning: ‘Fyrst, where were yow on Sonday at nyght laste paste betwixte IX off the clock and oone off the clock, and yn what company were yow yn?’ It is plain that there is no chance of escape. The punishment seems to have been adequate: no more lampoons appear in Hall.

Another day six members of the Worshipful Society going out of the hall spied a horse standing at the Great Gate ‘bearlyng a doe,’ his master, ‘a poor man,’ having gone to speak with someone in the kitchen. When the poor man comes back the doe is gone. Fines levied on the six come to 16*s.* 8*d.* The Masters of the Bench, being from the first excellent business men, as I suspected when I found what they made on a sublet of the garden, gave the poor man 2*s.* 8*d.* for his lost doe and put the rest into the money box toward the building of the new Gate House in Chancery Lane.

I have often wondered which were those penitential bricks. All over the Inn there must be penitential bricks and stones; and plenty in the chapel: but that is more seemly and as it should be. A whole load of bricks must have come from the

doe stealing that most delighted me. At a council held in February 1523 it was written that whereas four men confessed

'they werre at the takyng of three partes of oone dowe oute of the larder howse within the keichyn of Lincolles Inne in Crissemas-tyme and for the takyng of the same breke both the wall of the keichyn and also of the larder howse, whereby this hoyll company werre destytutyd of venison for oone day in the same Crissemas . . . others were at the eytyng of the same venison at the syne of the Toon beynde Holberoun Brigge and also conseyled the same yell dede that every one of the principal doers of the said yell acte should be oute of commons and pay ijs iiijd for their fines and that they come into commons ayen.'

Another of the Society's decrees holding since time out of mind was that which kept the Inn gates closed against ladies. The ladies seem to have had for the men of the law what has been called more than once a fatal attraction ; even to the diverting of them from their proper toil. One is driven to believe that the student could not see a pretty lass at the gate carrying a basket of lavender or broth posies without thinking how bright the sunshine was and how dull the law was and how pleasantly the doves were crooning on the roof ; and what was she like when she smiled ? The Benchers did their utmost to run their Howse on monastic lines. From time to time a desperate order goes forth, now about young ladies slipping into the Hall on revel nights, now about a house in the lane, now about an individual in the lane. The lane seems to have been fruitful of trouble.

'The wyfie that dwelleth on the forther seyde of the way ayenst the Gate shall avoyde the lane before the Tranclacyon of Seint Thomas next at her perell ; and yf she will not avoyde by that day then Mr. Chomeley and . . . shall put her to suretie of good bearing and to avoyde her the lane.'

That was in 1531. Women had long been forbidden, on a shocking penalty to their patron, to make beds or wash up. The Society threatens a man to take away his chamber (by a most desirable custom granted for life) if a petticoat so much as swings in the doorway. About thirty years after the wife was sent out of the lane the Benchers feel that they have done wisely at last. 'No woman except under the age of xij yeres or above the age of fourtie yeres shall resort or haunt to any chamber.' And there you are. All danger is over and the Benchers can go to supper

with tranquil hearts. The man with the pen firmly dots the twelve, puts fourtie in writing for safety's sake, and folds the black book away. The Worshipful Masters had perhaps never heard of a state in woman sometimes spoken of as *l'âge dangereux*. But then, how should they have ?

I am sure had I been allowed (safely in the fourties) to have anything to do with the service of the Inn I must have felt a fondness for the Benchers and a desire to protect them. Their goodness of heart was always breaking out and leading them to surreptitious kindnesses, and they really did not know how to manage the servants. From the scullion to the cook they were deceived ; and the Cheife Butler, who presumably was never deceived, must often have been in his chamber nursing a 'ploody pate.' The Benchers could not have given themselves away more completely than when they send some money to the widow of a servant, adding a stern note in the book that this is not to form a precedent. There were many cases like that of Richard Lutwyche, 'sometyme the wasshepott, whoe by casuall meanes ys become lame by the losse of hys legge.' Richard was given free meals.

In less orderly days there came awkward moments when a very young baby was left in a parcel under the cloister arches. The foundlings were never turned adrift. One or two were almost brought up by hand. The Benchers watched over them, bought them a guinea's worth of powders when a mad cat bit them, put them in a waggon and sent them to school with pocket money and nice clothes. The Society kept their servants till they dropped (as they do now) and allowed them a ruinous liberty in small privileges. Now and again a stand is made. One special council meeting deals with minor abuses, and the troubles are poured forth in a rhythmic wail :

'Whereas at this Counsell it was informed that the minister claymeth to have wekely a pounde of candells to carry home to his howse ; and the laundress claymeth to have, every tyme she bringeth home the lynen of the Howse, twelve loaffs of bredd, at every breakfast a potell (2 quarts) at every dinner a gallon, and at every supper another gallon of fresh beare ; and that the musicians clayme to have after their supper and the revells two loaffs of bredd a pece to carrye home w<sup>th</sup> them ; and that the brewers demaund to have every tyme they brynge drynke to the Howse, two loaffs of bredd a pece to carye home w<sup>th</sup> them ; and that the panyer man challengeth to have at every meale syx loaffs of bredd and a pot of

beare of three quartes—which claymes, challenges and demaundes are utterly misliked . . . Moreover it is informed that the weightes in the kytchen are not full weightes ; and that divers benchers' clarks fetch break fastes in their Masters' name when their Masters are in the hall at breakfast, and that the bere served to the Howse is not worth five shillings the barrell ; and that there are more in the keychen under the cook than is necessary and than in auncient tyme hath byn ; and that the steward useth to take more of the shilling for butter than he should doe, and doth cutt his beeff at two pence the pounde more than he should doe. . . .

Which is utterly misliked, and the benchers start keeping house all over again. They make a clean sweep. The thirsty laundress is comforted with twopence and the rest sent empty away. Unhappily for their peace, the Benchers cannot let well alone. A fortnight later they relent and say that the two pannier men can have 'their allowaunces of bredd as they have hadd, and twoe pottes of broken beare.' How long they stood out against the minister and brewers and musicians I did not learn. As for the laundress—a woman who toyed with ten quarts of beer a day was not going to be quietened long with twopence, heavy though that sum may have been in her day.

### III.

The oldest chronicles gave the name New Street to our lane, the track having led from the Old Temple by Holborn where the Crusaders had set up house, to the New Temple by the river. It was late in the twelfth century that the Knights Templars, rich with spoil, left one home for another. Sometimes in the silence of the early morning I think of that flitting, of the procession winding in pageantry and pride down the rough bridle path, stamping into the soil the first known history of Chancery Lane. The Templars brought with them queer traces of Eastern splendour, and lived in an unbelievable pomp, entertaining emperors and kings as blood brothers. To keep their lances stiff they must often joust in mimic war. The wardens on the city gates could hear across the steep little Flete River the shouts and shock of arms in Fickett's Fields, and see, when the knights were feasting and sleeping, the glow of forges where the smiths were fashioning horses' shoes and armour, and the knights' mail.

Meantime a handful of men were studying the law in a house set apart for them, one must believe, by that shadowy Earl of

Lincoln whose dwelling lay at the top of Shoe Lane. They would not have believed that a coming day would see the usurpation by their fellows of the proud Templars' halls and water meadows. Other buildings were rising in the fields on either side the muddy 'waie' the lawyers were destined to tread—the Chancellor's house, which changed the name of the lane, and that little chapel for the conversion of the Jews set not far from where the Record Office now stands in the Liberty of the Rolls. A generation after the Templars' horses thundered by I think I see a solitary monk going down the green-bordered track. He was Matthew Paris, on a journey from St. Albans. He looked curiously about and presently made a drawing of the Converts' chapel. I have not yet found whether he intended the drawing to adorn his amended version of *The History of England from the Creation to the year 1259*, but presumably it was the first drawing made of any building in Chancery Lane.

After the historian-monk's passage I hear the frightful roar of the Peasants' Revolt in 1381 and then nothing but the odd and jumbled echoes of a familiar Tudor London, the movements in an aristocratic suburb which grew about the City walls, ignoring the stinking tanners' yards of the Flete. The lawyers in the Temple and Thavies Inn must have been badly frightened that day when the wild Kentish men poured across the Flete Brigge looking for them. It has often occurred to me that no such terror could have touched them again until the fear that took the bravest when the enemy planes cruised over the Inns of Court. The peasants thought that in destroying records of the laws they hated and killing the men who set them down they would destroy the law.

A friend of Stow's, Francis Thynne, wrote one of the many little stories of that 'raid,' copying from an 'anominalle cronicle belongyng to the Abbey of St Marie's in Yorke.' He told how the Kentish men by treachery got into London and burnt Chancery registers and destroyed all the records they could lay hands on,

'et apres aleront a Temple pur destruyer les tenantz del dit Temple et ietterent les measons a la terre . . . Et aleront en Esglise et priserent toutz les liuers et rolles et remembrances que fueront en lour huches deins le Temple des apprentiz de la ley et porteront en le haut chemine et les arderent.'

The shrieking mob then made for John of Gaunt's manor house at the Savoy, and left in ruins the most superb dwelling of medieval London.

One can but think sadly of that long-stilled tumult and most wanton burning. Save for Wat Tyler and his men I should not now be wondering what was the history of the 'Howse of Lincoln's Inn' before that house moved to the bishop's palace by the Chancellaire Lane.

The Masters of the Bench had a great deal of trouble with their lane before that barbaric waie was tamed to use. It was always the principal road for the Inn, the gate into an outer world of constant change and development. As the generations went by the Inn set up its defences against neighbours who might come too close. A little house of medieval learning was able to throw out wings and elbow its way into a comely and dignified state and presently entrench itself within its much contested boundaries. The place had already a venerable air when in the seventeenth century a wall nine feet high was set around houses and grounds, and the Inn enclosed. The outer world could but look in at the Great Gate and pass by, as it does now when working hours are over. A personal dignity, so to speak—the dignity of precedence and a conscious hold on the development of a race—was added to dignity of place when presently the Inns of Court were recognised as the home of the private life of the English Bar. One can see as in an image, inside those nine-feet walls, the building up of this honourable fellowship in an unbroken succession since time out of mind to the present day, paralysed by war, plague, fire, 'sudden death and sweating death,' shaken by revolutions and the overthrow of monarchies, and still unconquerable. It is this that I must always see in the walls as well as those endearing penitential bricks.

\* \* \* \* \*

The tylers are now busy on the new roof of the old hall that so often held the sound of sweet and forgotten music, harps and lutes and the plaintive viols. I have not been able to discover what ballads and airs were tuned there, or if anyone ever sang *Have you seen but a whyte lily grow?* It seems that many such songs must have been heard to a harp or lute in the dim old hall whose six candles shed a brave light.

The Society probably took their music for granted. Minstrels were kept in their service and looked after when feeble and past playing. The music of the Inn rose in a crescendo to the two great feasts of the year, Candlemas and All Hallowtide, and these were upheld with medieval richness and joy. As I look at the old hall I must feel that vanished music to be our saddest loss: music and

horsemen. It is my poignant regret that I have never seen a cavalcade of riders, cloaked and jingling, turn in at the great gate and clatter along the 'causey' to the hall door. An echo of much laughter, dancing and song may be caught amid the humdrum tale of nights and days until the years came when the Puritans made an end to fireside minstrelsy. The lawyers could dance galliards and corantos, and their neighbours in the Temples came in now and again to dance against them. At the Restoration the art of fireside singing and dancing seems to have been lost. The young men are chidden by the Benchers for being backward with their steps. But the medieval spirit is dead ; in its place has come a feeling for the spectacular and artificial, for the staged play and an admiring throng.

Revels and 'Huntyng Nyghts' and 'Solempe Feastes' alike seem now to be part of an heroic past. The Society keep up their great days in an undiminished splendour, housed in the new hall that flanks the high garden ; but never a whimper of a free fight or voices raised in song, or heigh speiche and knockynge on the pottes comes through the guarded door. A ghostly visitor would feel that new silence and other new sounds the strangest element in his ancient home. He would miss the hurly-burly of coaches and horses in the cobbled lane, the shouts of chairmen at the gate. He would miss the merry tumult of church bells ; bells swung on any pretext, answering each other from the City to the City Liberties and across the little Fleet valley to the bounds of Temple Bar and beyond. Dwellers in the Inn to-day can think of the bells of a forgotten London when they hear St. Clement Danes on a solitary week-night, the only voice left in that jocund fellowship.

It would be pleasant to compare the work-books and account books concerning the present rebuilding with those that were made when the old hall was rising and when the 'stronge and faire gallery' was built on it 'for the surplusage of this Howse.' The growth of the Inn in Tudor days seems to have been a piecemeal affair. Members of the Society were allowed to do their building for themselves, now adding a whole room—'certen chambers of three storeys high from the ground'—now bits of a room, as when Mr. Mawe was allowed at his own expense to 'adde to his chamber a foote in bredth and a yard in length next adjoyning to his chimney out and from the Porter's Lodge.' Once set up by the members these rooms were granted for life without fine and with the right of nominating a successor.

The account books of those times give a delightful picture of men at work and in friendly intercourse. Every penny spent was faithfully put down and explained. The balance sheets would not always bear scrutiny, but on the other hand it was no small matter adding up that assortment of shillings and pence and taking the sum away from a long and shaky column of fines and forfeiture, peines and penalties. When they were patching and re-tiling the old Hall some three and a half centuries ago, 'Candells' are found for the workmen to be working day and night. A cart load of tyles comes to 11s. 6d. The tyler is paid 8s. for 6 days' labour in tylng the Hall at 16d. a day. The man with the quill doubtless thought he was putting down something quite ordinary when he added to the building accounts '16d. for the feechyn of a gyn (kind of crane) from the Towre too unlade tymber at the Whyte Fryers wharffe and 16d. for the carieng home of the gyn to the Towre.' The timber in the meantime had been bought — '10s. 2d. spent rydng to Redyng for to bye timber with the hyre of my horses two days.' Twenty-six loads of timber came from Reading at 14s. a load; but not without accident. Ten pence is put down in the accounts 'for the hyer of a bote for the sekynge of one pece of tymber that went a way with the water.'

#### IV.

I often think of the Templars jousting in Fickett's Croft when I see the gentlemen of the Epée club fencing in the Inn garden. On evenings of June the white figures have a magical effect—white made gold in the sunlight, pale mauve in the shadow, so that these two interlacing colours braid the green. Our nine-foot wall throws up its ghostly defence at this hour; the past is re-created; just so must the sun-dappled figures have danced in the heyday of the Inn. I am never sure which is the more beautiful pose for the lithe, slender bodies—when they rest motionless, foils out-thrust, feet together—or when they suddenly break into their fighting step. Seen at a distance, as they so constantly recapture an attitude or play between two or three, they recall figures on Egyptian friezes—angular, repetitive, with an odd reminder of the law of frontality.

The garden, now so trim and kept, with not a wild word in its mouth, was lovelier unregenerate. In the early summers after the war long grass waved on the sloping bank between the ancient faire walke and the high walk, and on Sunday mornings a lounger with a book could lie and forget to read when it was seen that the grass ran

up to the sky, cut out against the blue. On the lower lawn the hard soil was still sulky from the stamping feet of the O.T.C. ; only the older residents know the triumph in the thick turf there.

You can see the months and their mother heralded and lamented in the long flower-bed under the wall, out of the weather that can drive so bitterly across the Fields. There is no need to ask is February here, or May, when you pace that solitary walk : few more solitary in London. Now and again on a week-day a decorous figure comes out of the new Hall archway and advances along the gravel stretch, looking at the flowers yard by yard. Perhaps he is a Bencher and has a right to dictate what shall be planted there, lily or rose. The garden was the last outpost of the private rights of the Inn ; residents who were not members of the Society understood that they might pass through, but not loiter there. It is in my memory that the Masters of the Bench pulled up their imaginary stakes and said 'Enter ; you are welcome.'

For many a generation the Benchers have peered among their flowers and paced beneath the trees. They have mourned the passing of great elms their grandfathers told them of, have watched jealously the leafing of slips that then were tender and now are stalwart trees or have come to be numbered with the fallen. I can see them cloaked and spurred, with generous hats over their long hair, wigged, shrunken in apparel, ever changing and ever the same. They grieved to see the tree-trunks so black, and mused on what London must have been before the ships carrying sea-coal berthed in the Flete river. They have told out on a deliberate finger the plants most loved. I can count those plants as if it were only a long yesterday that saw them rooted there : pansies, columbines, sweet William, marigold, larkspurs and monkshood, snapdragon and bergamot, the Rose of Sharon and the Marvel of Peru, sea-thrift in patches and Canterbury bells ; and one tawny lily looking earnestly at the sky. I know that dahlias will come out as the others fade. When autumn leaves are drifting sideways down, and the faire walke is rusty, there are always Michaelmas daisies left to brighten the meagre noon.

It is not for nothing that the Benchers clung so long to their high garden. The weight and tenure of the past, bodiless and unbreakable, is most felt here. And when that sad minute bell tolls from the chapel I feel that there under the trees another honourable man has gone to his rest. They stay there, I think. Within cry of this sward was the field of their labour. They can look back

rather wistfully, as all men must, on years now clear to be judged, remembering perhaps some secret ideal wrestled for, something that stoned for the intolerable purposelessness of human life. The work is left half done, unexplained, the seeds of hope buried in it. But I think at times I may hear someone say 'Is my team ploughing ?'

\* \* \* \* \*

Since the war there has been no darkness in the Inn. Such night as falls is like the June night of the far north, which is no night but only twilight and dawn. In the air is always the faint glow of the City lights, and along the walks are friendly lamps that leave the roof lines unimpaired. If I come into the Inn by the West Gate at night I am always suddenly aware of the sky leaning over the clustered buildings of the old corner, most of all if there has been rain, and the open way holds out a net to catch the stars. When the full moon swings clear over that corner I feel that I have been granted a boon. I can stand there and know that whatever has happened to London that sky-line has not changed since the old Hall could show its lighted lattice panes, since barges went down the highway of the river carrying those who sang and played their husky-sweet recorders, since the watchman walked up the lane with lantern and stave and stopped outside the gate and cried the hour, and cried that all was well, and passed.

*The quotations in this article are taken from *The Black Books*, edited by W. P. Baildon; with the exception of that on the Peasants' Revolt: G. M. Trevelyan, *English Hist. Review*, July, 1898.*

## THE PORTENT.

PLUTARCH; SULLA.

BY JOHN FISHER.

PHILIPPOS could feel that his hearer was not listening, but still he must read on, though his voice was hoarse and his head swimming, read the long lines of the Iliad, which once he had known by heart and which now seemed to catch in his throat. The general's tent was lighted by a great silver lamp whose flaring oil cast a strange light on the silken hangings with their Oriental devices, glittered on the couch's golden feet and on the inlaid table, and threw into strong relief the face of the man under its beams. He lay back upon his cushions, staring at the roof, and when at last he gestured for silence, the boy looked at him curiously. At times before he had seen that strange, far-away look in his master's eyes, and he knew what it signified. At the muttered order he closed the book (one filched, he saw, from the library of Appelicon at Athens) and moved the wine-flask nearer the couch; then he slipped through the curtains and vanished into the darkness. Sulla was left with the fears and doubts that pressed about him: Sulla the fortunate, disturbed and uneasy.

He had driven Marius from Rome and set up his own rule there; then he had turned to the East to conquer Greece and to humble King Mithradates, and while his armies were toiling through the long battles of Chaeronea and Orchomenos, when the marshes were churned into a bloody froth, while he was crossing his wits with sleek Oriental diplomats on the windy heights of Dardanus, the city he had left had burst into chaos, Cinna calling up his rabble to burn and loot, and Marius returning—a shaggy wolf slinking out of the wilderness—to his work of murder and of proscription. Sulla had remained at his post while at home his friends were hunted down and slain, his house sacked, his wife driven into exile; but now his work in the East was done, and he could return to take revenge. He knew the panic that his coming must create: here at Dyrrachium he had heard how the Democrats were rallying; how Cinna had mustered an army to meet him in

Greece and how the army had turned on its leader and stoned him to death. It would soon be time to strike. His veterans would follow him over the very walls of Rome. But to-night he hesitated.

There were doubts which he could not express ; real, but vague and shadowy. The red, blotchy face might remain calm and impassive : the white, neat hands might play with the cup and never tremble—but within there whirled a chaos of doubts and fears and superstitions. The wisdom of the ancients could not help him—Plato and Aristotle and Theophrastus—nor the dull moralising of his own people. On the table before him lay the little golden Apollo which he wore about his neck. He looked at it hopelessly. If only he were granted some sure sign. Portents enough there had been : the earth which flared into flame at the Laverna, eight years ago : the mice and ravens devouring their young : the trumpet-blast from a clear sky. The Etruscan sages had foretold a new age, and to Sulla himself—the loved one of Venus—these portents had pointed. But that was long ago, and his faith was flagging. If only he might see his goddess again—the Moon goddess, Bellona of the Cappadocians—who had stood by his bed and armed him with thunder. If only Apollo would grant him a sign. . . .

It was a windy night ; the tent flapped heavily in the gusts and the lamp swung and flickered. Outside, the camp was still astir, for the preparations for the crossing were going on apace ; he could hear the shouting of commands and the clatter of little forges. Twice his legates looked in, with papers for his attention or news of messages, but he motioned them away, for he was busy with his thoughts. Once before he had marched on Rome, had led his men under arms into the Forum—he remembered the press of faces, white and scared in the torchlight, and the feeling of the great buildings all around him, full of watching men. Would the gods permit such impiety twice ? And besides . . . Carbo had two hundred thousand men, and also there was Norbanus and Marius the younger, and all the forces of the Democrats. And all the while the little golden Apollo glittered in the lamplight and gave no sign.

Then suddenly it seemed that his prayers were answered. There was a sound of voices raised outside : his legate protesting, and a man answering in a queer, strained, excited voice. He seemed to be begging for an interview with the general and the guards

were thrusting him away ; and all at once a conviction came over Sulla that here was something of vital importance. He clapped his hands, and when his aide appeared, ordered the man to be sent in to him.

It was a centurion of a Macedonian cohort, a tall man whose dark face was flushed with excitement and whose hands shook before him. After him came two servants carrying something in a sack : it was some living thing, for when they cast it down it heaved and kicked a little. The centurion's voice trembled as he told his tale. He had been riding in the woods of the Nymphaeum, near Apollonia, where the pitch-springs smoke and bubble among the trees. They had seen it asleep in a hollow among the bushes ; they had stolen up and flung a blanket over it ; they had brought it to the general for it was a great portent. Sulla cut short his words. 'What is it ?' he demanded, 'let me see !' and the habit of a lifetime of suspicion sent his hand to his sword as the servants opened the sack.

They shook it out on to the thick red carpet, and he started back and clutched the table. It was a little brown creature, no bigger than a child, with a child's bare body and face puckered with terror, but its legs were the shaggy legs of a goat, and its sharp little hooves kicked at the rugs. It lay where it was thrown, huddled on the floor, its shoulders and back arched and shaking, and one thin arm across its eyes to shut out the glare of the lamp. No sound came from it but a strained, uneasy breathing ; the four men stood watching it for a long moment of silence. Then Sulla looked back at his little Apollo. His prayers were answered : here was an omen which would run like wildfire through the army. 'Will it speak ?' he asked. The centurion shrugged his shoulders. Sulla put out his sheathed sword and touched the creature's bare brown side. A tremor ran through the lean body ; the goat legs jerked convulsively ; for a moment it raised its head and looked around, its great round eyes agonised as the eyes of a trapped rabbit. Then it covered its face again and moaned . . . a low, whimpering moan like that of a child in a nightmare. Sulla and the centurion looked at each other : one of the slaves had fallen to his face in terror.

The general clapped his hands again ; he sent for his interpreters and his priests, his soothsayers and his oracle-mongers. As an afterthought he sent for the Greek boy, Philippos with his writing-tablets. They crowded into the tent and stood around

staring—a pressed circle of robes and uniforms in the middle of which lay the little cowering creature. The interpreters were bending over it and speaking to it: the priests were whispering among themselves: the centurion and his servants had been crowded out of the tent; he was peering through the doorway over the shoulders of the guards. Sulla watched the men at their efforts. The creature shrank away from them as they knelt by it, and none of them dared to touch it: they only poked at it timidly with their staves—but still no sound came save the low, agonised moan which Philippos could not bear to listen to. . . . The sound of a child in terror: the sound of a lamb or fawn in the teeth of a wolf . . . a low, bewildered, helpless sound that made him sick to hear.

Sulla listened impatiently. ‘It must speak,’ he said. ‘You must make it speak. Here—try this.’ He took a dagger from the table and tossed it to the ground—its blade glittered keenly. ‘Not too much,’ he warned. ‘You know how to do it.’ The moaning went on. Philippos covered his ears and turned away. But he heard as the moans suddenly became a shrill, thin scream that rose and died away and rose again. He did not look until the sounds were over and the men had risen from the shrinking form. ‘It is no use?’ said Sulla, and turned to the haruspices. ‘Apollo has sent me this creature. I will offer it to him. We will sacrifice it in the morning, and you shall read me the signs of the sacrifice. But until then I will keep it by me: it may be willing to speak later. Philippos, I entrust it to you. Take it to a tent and keep it chained there: if it wants food, feed it. The gods desire contented victims.’ As the men were leaving he stopped them with a sign. ‘Tell no one of this till morning. We cannot guess the purpose of the god.’

They chained the creature with the leash of one of Sulla’s hounds, and left Philippos sitting beside it in the dim little tent. He saw that the priests were annoyed at Sulla’s whim: their dark faces sneered at him and his captive, and they muttered together as they left. Their turn would come in the morning. Before they went they spoke to the guard at the tent door, and his armour rattled as he moved closer to the entrance. Then their voices died away, and all was still. The camp was silent now, save for the far-away challenge and counter-challenge of the sentries round the ramparts. Philippos pulled aside the flap and peered out: the wind was whirling the clouds across the sky, and the moon

hung half hidden in the driving wrack around it. The moon—Sulla's goddess ! He made a grimace of disgust and let the canvas fall. The little creature lay at the foot of the tent-pole, pressing its body against the earth which it clutched with its fingers. It was so still that for a moment he thought that it was dead, but when he bent over it he saw its shoulders rising and falling. He wished that it would keep its face covered ; seen thus, it lost some of that dreadful human air : one only realised the shaggy legs and the strong goat-smell. But it seemed to feel his presence and looked up, staring at him with those wide terrified eyes that watched his movements with shrinking dread. He put out his hand to touch it, and it cowered away with a little sob ; then it lay still, trembling, while he stroked its rough skin. The Nymphaeum of Apollonia . . . the cool groves where the sunlight filtered down through the pine-trees : the bare gullies where the pitch-pools steamed :—the quiet dells full of bracken and sheltering trees and all the glad blossom of spring. Somehow he did not realise how fantastic it all was—like some dream inspired by poets and painters. This little brown thing of the woods had nothing to do with the imaginings of writers and sculptors . . . it was only something small and alive and very frightened—a shy child caught up into this barbaric place of arms and torture. In the power of Sulla.

He knew Sulla well now. When the Roman armies had been battering at the walls of Athens, his father had resolved to be upon the winning side, and Philippos had been sent from the quiet country villa at Eleusis to be the general's page—cup-bearer and amanuensis and other things besides. At first he had not minded so much—he had been interested and bewildered and thrilled. But now, when Sulla had half forgotten him, he had fallen into a blackness of misery and shame and fear. Fear and hatred for the plump, polished Roman with his smooth wits and iron will : with his love of battle and his queer, slavish superstitions. He hated the cruelty and the ruthless killing : the strange, rigid Roman discipline that was stiff as steel in battle and afterwards broke into a barbaric orgy of plunder and looting : he hated the dark, fantastic ritual of oracles and sacrifices and ceremonies. Above all his heart bled for Greece. Homer and Aeschylus had filled his mind with golden, romantic dreams, but time had scattered them away. The Roman armies had moved against the city of the violet crown ; the groves of the Academy had been cut down for their

great engines and rams ; the night had come when the wall was breached by the Ceramicus, and blood streamed out through the Dipylon Gate. Athens was saved by her great past, the living were forgiven for the dead, but between the upstart slave defender and the conquering Romans the virgin city of Pallas was humbled and crushed. And all Sulla's reverence for the gods was the empty show of superstition. He vowed half Thebes to Apollo—but he had plundered Apollo's temples at Delphi and had invented a truly Roman sophism to explain away the warning of the harp. The gods of Greece must serve the Roman. And to-morrow he would work his will on another Grecian life.

The creature chained to the pole was still now, under his stroking hand ; the tortured gasps were relaxing and the wild eyes were losing their terror. Perhaps in time it would sleep and dream of the forest glades and glades of Apollonia . . . the hidden streams and the winds that rustled the branches. But in a few hours . . .

He remembered the cruel, sneering faces of the Etruscan haruspices, with their ritual that was half magic and half a hollow sham. He knew it all so well : the altar in the morning sun : the herald and the servants and the slaughterers with their clubs and knives : the flutes piping shrill, savage notes. The fillets and white chaplets : the incense and prayers : the scattering of wine and salt and flour, and the words ' *Hoc Age !*' and then the gasp of the severed throat. The hiss of the flames as the blood fell on them, and the tall, lean haruspex, his head veiled in white and his arms all bare and bloody, pawing and fumbling among the steaming entrails, reading the message of the god in the tangle of guts. Sulla waiting with eager face for the shouting of the priest, and the soldiers ready in the long lines of tents to take up the cry and echo it with clatter of swords and shields.

How remote seemed the days before the Romans came—quiet days of reading on a cool terrace that looked over to Salamis : days of hunting in the woods below Cithaeron : nights when the torches of the Mysteries danced above the black waters. . . . Those days of hunting ; those mountain-nights ! He looked down at his captive again : it was asleep, the terror smoothed from its face, and he caught his breath, for he saw that one brown hand was clutching the edge of his tunic. Its fears were gone ;—but only for the moment : soon would come the terror and agony of the daylight, and the shouting, surging ranks of the legions. For a moment a wild idea came to him, and he listened for the movements of the

sentry. . . . But he knew that they could never escape. In the straight streets of the camp it was hopeless, and beyond them were the walls and trench, the guards at the gates and the sentries on the ramparts. The poor, wild spirit was hemmed in by the palisades and the swords, the ruthless net of torches and patrols and passwords. He looked at it again: it moved in its dreams, twitching like a dog, and then gave a little sleepy sigh of content. It was free once again, running lightly among the pine-woods. There was only one way to save it from recapture. He dared not use a dagger, for he dreaded Sulla's anger and must make no mark: instead, he took up the end of his blanket and pressed it over the creature's mouth and nose.

When the last convulsion was done, he rose to his feet. He would tell Sulla that it had died in its sleep: he would rage for a while, and then shrug his shoulders and look for some other sign from heaven. And sign or no sign, he would reconquer Rome. But one life at least had escaped from his power. Surely it was rejoicing now, running with the night winds under the moon—running beneath the dark, swaying branches in some valley remote and inviolable. Looking down at the limp little body Philippos felt no regret: rather he felt that he had saved from desecration something beautiful and precious—some part of the spirit of Hellas which would never be bound by any Roman master. Outside the dawn was breaking on the windy grey sea: soon the bugles would call the camp to life again, and the ranks of steel would gather themselves and move and carry him on with them. He hesitated a moment, then flung back the flaps and called to the sentry.

*RANDOM RAMBLINGS IN RURAL INDIA.*

BY ERIC H. N. GILL.

ONE may view India from many angles and each will bear scrutiny and criticism in accordance with one's personal outlook. In all fairness this is the most one may say without indulging in generalisations.

One may sail along its picturesque sea-coast or sojourn in the cities of the ports. One may inspect the industrial centres and places of historic interest, and revel in the beauties of natural phenomena whilst travelling over hundreds of miles at express speed in comparative comfort. One may float down the turbid waters of Mother Ganges and feast one's eyes on the wonderful panorama of Benares city, or shudder and squirm with Miss Katharine Mayo at the sins of the social system ; or, one may search diligently amidst the official archives and glean from the district gazetteers such information and knowledge as is welcome or desirable. For, after all, is it not largely a question of training and predilection ?

But Calcutta is not India, nor yet is Bombay ; and Delhi is but the official capital. Thereto flock the bankers and business men and the political pundits. One sees projected on to the social screen the results of Occidental teaching and civilisation on an Oriental background, and the picture is often blurred. Rural India, the real India, unsophisticated and lovable India, is entirely blotted out. Wherefore I find it expedient to treat Anglo-Oriental civilisation as a thing apart. Rather, I would ask you—if it so happen that you have seen the sights of Benares or that dream in white marble, the Taj Mahal at Agra—to render your mind a perfect blank, to create a sympathetic atmosphere, and to follow me in spirit whilst I conduct you through a romantic country-side and touch ever so lightly on the daily round of rural life. The pictures I shall paint for you, the interpretations shall be yours in accordance with the way in which you might care to indulge your fancy.

Let me introduce the peasant, one of those teeming millions who constitute the bulk of India's population. He is a conservative individual, often stupid and frequently ignorant as judged by the Western standard of intelligence. Many may be met with in a

day's march. Some, with an innate sense of politeness, salute spontaneously ; others, no less polite but momentarily stunned by the sudden aspect of a stranger, merely stand and stare. Others, again, are crude though seldom rude, but it is from these superficial first impressions that the casual acquaintance is apt to form his opinions ; and mostly they will be wrong.

Let us, however, dally awhile in that simple environment of mud huts and rural robinia, where the cattle graze contentedly or take turns with the revolving *kohloo* or sugar-cane press ; where the swish of baled water comes constantly to one's ears, and the yellow mustard blossom adorns the wheat as with a golden mantle ; and let us, if we have the trick of it, address the peasant in his own particular patois ; enjoy, if we can, his little jokes ; smile when he smiles, and sympathise with his many troubles ; then and then only can we see the peasant in his true perspective.

A harsh word, a severe look, an aggressive gesticulation ; all these still work in due season. But if one happens to be at all observant one cannot miss the look of mingled fear and disillusionment which follows such action. Hail an old patriarch with reverence, address some decrepit old woman as Mother, and behold the look of appreciative bewilderment which enlivens their wizened features. It is then that they want to render respect, to provide one with the best the village can produce. Protestations are worse than useless. Pots of milk sweetened with the warm juice of the sugar-cane, and one cannot be less polite than they ; so, with a muttered prayer for protection against unknown bacteria, you drink their health and wander on your way.

Occasionally one may discuss politics, though they are much more likely to be concerned with market values or the construction of a new railway line with its attendant ramifications ; and if fortune so decree one may witness a city butcher strike a bargain for a superannuated bullock in the very midst of an orthodox assembly, and be glibly told by some peasant spokesman that there is little difference between this action and that which causes so much communal strife. But—and this will be added with the most disarming smile—' We get little recreation, *Sahib*, and a real row occasionally is a pleasant change from the daily monotony of agricultural toil.'

Yes, he's a lovable fellow is the Indian peasant ; and if happiness and contentment consists in having more work than one can comfortably do and an absolutely reliable sense of humour, then this agricultural toiler is thrice blessed.

By the same token, however, the inherent conservatism of the peasantry is being slowly undermined ; but whether for the good or detriment of the race only time can decide. It is not long since the *kohloo* was familiar enough in every cane cultivating village, crude and noisy and wasteful withal in that a large percentage of the succulent juice was never recovered.

In their places has been installed a new device, equally crude but more efficient, in the form of metal rollers, geared together, whose serrated edges grip the cane and squeeze it flat as it passes through an adjustable chink. In some the machinery is the property of the village, in others it is merely hired for the season ; but the motive power is still the bullock and will continue to remain the bullock till the end of time.

And yet, despite the acknowledged efficiency of the new innovation, one still regards the discarded *kohloo* with feelings of regret. It used to be rather a joy to watch it working and to listen to the resonant droning of the revolving wooden arm, some so elaborately carved and fluted, so quaintly original and essentially Eastern, so homely and romantic.

Then another portent. Clear and piercing it is borne on the wings of every wind that blows, and in the same dark hovel where the women chanted from morning till night, whilst they pulverised their wheat between crude grinding-stones, now arises the clank and clatter of a miniature flour mill inextricably confused with the regular explosions and distressing odours of a crude-oil engine.

Without the buildings a rusty exhaust pipe mounts vertically and trembles violently at each explosion. At its top extremity a hollow brass vessel is set at a rakish angle, which, on the same principle of blowing into a key, converts the puffing exhaust into a riot of piercing sound, thus attracting the peasants from miles around.

But—more of the peasant anon—let me alter the focus. Let me ask you to visualise instead a flat, extensive plain, once the scene of martial evolutions ; a few dilapidated barn-like buildings ; an ancient church foursquare and solid ; the disintegrated outline of public gardens ; the straggling avenue of the ladies' mile ; and in the midst of all a solitary sandstone cenotaph, dome-shaped and imposing, within whose enamelled palings a decrepit gardener still tends the crotons and prunes the roses. Such are the relics of an old-time frontier station of British India.

But, though the station has been shorn of its pristine splendour, and its strategic importance relegated to the limbo of lost memories,

the cenotaph once harboured the mortal remains of an English gentleman, who, during his official career, combined the high offices of Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief ; a combination of powers which enabled him to introduce a measure which has since elevated him to the position of patron saint of the agricultural classes of Bengal ; a measure, the true significance of which only the Bengali can appreciate.

And so, regularly on auspicious occasions, the midday train from down country brings its complement of grateful pilgrims, who descend on the cenotaph in a cavalcade of country transport, perform their act of worship, and return forthwith to catch the return train back to their homes. Where do they come from ? Whither do they go ? Why do they thus travel at all ? Who shall answer ? Only one thing is certain. That debt of gratitude has survived two generations, nor is it ever likely to be forgotten.

Alongside the cenotaph stands a spreading ficus beneath which reposes a white-washed grave containing the remains—so popular belief has it—of that English gentleman's cook. It is not easy to determine the spiritual relation between the two, but thither it is that the village housewives repair with their offerings of spices and flowers, and many are the days of the month when the sacred taper may be seen to flicker in its appointed niche.

And yet they tell you that it is impossible for the Englishman to acquire sanctity in the eyes of the Oriental.

Now, every village has a bazaar day once or twice a week in accordance with its size and economic importance, and on these occasions the rough entablature adjacent to its rain-scored walls becomes the hub of that rural universe. The peasant takes little count of time and distance, but the days of the week are to him as familiar as his devotional cycles, in consequence of which the bazaar is sure to be well attended.

They come from all points of the compass, a motley array of rural humanity keeping strictly to the tortuous paths so as to avoid trespassing in another's field. Here an opulent grain merchant driving before him his heavily laden pony. There a bevy of village girls, bright eyed and buxom, balancing on their heads some succulent viand. Here, again, a cartload of village gentry whose gay turbans attract the eye as their bullocks trot merrily along ; and finally that most pathetic sight of all, a matronly figure with a babe on each hip and a load on her head, wearily wending her way to the busy assemblage.

And while the customers continue to converge across country in straggling groups the bazaar progresses as in the manner of all bazaars the whole world over. Horses neigh and paw the ground and shower the stalls with clods of earth. Bullocks, piles of merchandise and pilfering pi-dogs obstruct the pedestrians. Pungent wood-smoke permeates everywhere, village gossip is eagerly retailed, and bargaining is reduced to a fine art.

The atmosphere is one of social indulgence. The cloth merchant sits cheek by jowl with the seller of sweet potatoes. The carpenter plies his trade where the vegetable gardener offers his turnips to the highest bidder, and the bead merchant vies with the condiment man in an artistic arrangement of colours.

Meanwhile all traffic on the public highway is brought to a standstill, and must needs diverge through the sticky lanes where neither physical force nor moral objurgation will move the carts from the evil ways into which they must necessarily fall. Yet nobody complains and none may deny the vendor his right to display his wares.

There happens to be a bazaar incident and my attention was drawn to it by an indignant voice from across a wall. 'If we could only catch the culprits,' exclaimed that voice, 'we would . . .' and here followed a detailed description of the most improbable corrective in which all female relations were upheld to eternal degradation. I deemed the occasion worthy of investigation.

Beyond the wall a crowd was collected busily engaged in the discussion of a central object. Beyond the crowd a dozen monkeys grabbed grain in the intervals of respite from persecution by an unruly mob of arrogant children. Herein lay the trouble, for enterprising monkey-snappers from other villages had rid themselves of a popular pest by letting loose their captives during the night, and one could not help but sympathise with the indignation of the unfortunate dupes.

Presently the crowd parted and revealed in their midst a large monkey, weak, worn, and bedraggled, whose weary eyes gazed at one in pathetic appeal. Small children grovelled in the mud and offered it food. The same villagers who cursed its captors fervently prayed that it would not die. Village mothers held their babes a little tighter and watched sorrowfully from a distance. A marriage party descended from their bedecked carts, showered it with sweets, and went on their way; whilst the object of all this attention bowed its head in Simian meditation and nursed an ugly wound on one of its legs.

And then that same voice was raised again in admonishing tones. 'Ye roasters of gram,' it said, 'ye branders of cattle, had ye not better sense than to use a branding iron on a monkey? Mark ye the vengeance of *Hanooman* (the monkey god) if this unfortunate does not recover.'

Which is only the way of the peasant after all.

But what of this agricultural toiler away from his natural environment? How does he fare in other surroundings? Let me paint you pictures of two of them in two vastly different walks of life. The first is at present leaning his young back against the sharp angle of a stone pillar directly opposite to my window. His legs are set at an awkward angle to his body, and he gazes continually at his toes in expectorative contemplation.

I find that his amusements are simple and his menu, of which he partakes at irregular intervals, catholic in the extreme. He regards the children's toys with rapt interest, something akin to a pathetic yearning, and when nobody is watching he enlivens the weary hours by pelting the pi-dogs with stones and interfering generally with other people's business.

He frequently offers unsolicited advice to the servants, criticises their household duties, regales them with the latest village gossip, and, continuously forgetting where he is, starts to hum a village ditty to the accompaniment of a loud tattoo on an empty oil-tin.

Funnily enough, the one thing in which he evinces the least interest is his legitimate work. I do not blame him; I merely state a fact. Possibly he does not find the work congenial, for, having regard to his upbringing, he has never given the matter sufficient thought. If he had thought at all he would have been a sceptic; if he were a little older he would certainly be a cynic.

He is no longer a product of the big cities, the march of civilisation having crowded him out. But here, where the aspect is unmarred by unseemly wires nor the mellow moonlight outraged by the vulgar blaze of the filament, one still has occasion to find fault with, but mostly to bless, the lowly though essential services of the village *punkah coolie* (fan-puller).

My other hero is sixty or he might be seventy; the years rest lightly on his shoulders and it is not easy to gauge them correctly. Small in stature, wiry of build, with a grey moustache adorning a weather-beaten face, he wanders over the country-side and attends to his official duties with that sprightly step of youth which at once commands the envy and respect of all who behold him.

To salute his *Sahib* morning and evening, to anticipate his smallest wish, and to subordinate self to his convenience, is the creed by which he lives ; certain essential principles of duty learnt at the knees of a Rajput mother of whom he is justly proud.

Many are the miles we have wandered together, now flushing the snipe from its boggy environment or the quail from its grain-strewed stubble. Now wading waist deep after wily mallard, following the pintail to their evening feeding grounds, listening in the moonlight for the music of the grey geese, or marking the whir of black partridge as they rise like rockets from their beloved sugar-cane. One cannot help marvelling at the remarkable energy of the man ; no distance or fatigue deters him from the job in hand, and I honestly believe he would willingly lay down his life for his master.

His dialect is that of the crudest peasant, and an agriculturist he remains at heart ; for when the occasion offers and he has earned respite from his official labours, he sets his rural home in order, tends his own cattle, and walks proudly behind the family plough. It is not easy to turn the real peasant from his ancestral avocations.

But if I may be permitted, at this juncture, to sound a serious note it is because a woman is worthy of our highest consideration. The women of the lower and less-favoured castes portray the seamy side of life in this land of promise, and no amount of brushwork will disguise this pathetic fact.

It is a hard life, my masters ! In the cities the rates are adamant for such as she, and when she presently returns to the ferry with an empty basket, having sold her cow-cakes for a few coppers, she is hustled and jostled by callous manhood into a quiet corner, there to gaze out upon the world with listless eyes from which the light of interest and joy of anticipation have long since departed.

And what, think you, is the nature of the welcome that awaits her home-coming at the distant village ? Invariably she returns to an empty hovel, dark and impoverished amid squalid surroundings. Her husband is busy with agricultural pursuits, and her children, grubby and mud-bespattered, grovel eternally in a neighbouring drain and are concerned not with either her comings or her goings. Her next duty is perfectly clear, and that is the preparation of the midday meal.

And when darkness descends on the country-side, and the cattle have been tethered, and the village dogs howl mournfully for no reason in particular, you may observe this indefatigable toiler bending low over the reposing form of her lord and master and relaxing

his muscles with gentle massage. Life for her has become entirely mechanical, and even that love which springs eternal in the feminine breast has mostly passed her by.

Now India is a land of superstitions, in fact superstitions are legion. Indian superstitions would furnish a fascinating tome, but that is not my intention. I wish to draw just one little picture by way of illustration.

It had been one of those little tanks choked with white and pink flowered water-lilies, which are at once the pride and the glory of an Indian village ; where the green pig-nuts flourished and sandpipers quarrelled and dabchicks built their curious little floating nests. Now it was sadly shrunken and no longer a thing of beauty, its surface marred by a rust-coloured fungus, margined with viscous and odiferous ooze.

Amid the sprouting tussocks of rank grass a few donkeys grazed disconsolately ; in one corner the ubiquitous washerman, in optimistic mood, wallowed knee-deep in the turbid liquid ; and at the far side a party of fishermen struggled valiantly with the ooze and slime in order to circumvent the finned inhabitants also much overcome by the apparent stagnancy.

And when the first haul was beached hopes ran high. Certainly a small child, large of cranium and strangely corpulent, was not disappointed. She fell upon the rotting pig-nuts with loud shouts of childish glee and transferred them, ooze and all, to a capacious mouth. Obviously she was the mascot and pig-nuts were hers for the asking, so there we shall leave her to the special protection of Providence.

But the catch was disappointing : bugs and beetles innumerable and a sluggish water-snake. Casually I enquired whether it was harmless. 'Oh yes,' replied the spokesman, 'ordinarily quite harmless, but to-day, being Sunday, poisonous to a degree.'

After all, they are strange suspicious people these fisherfolk, and my presence in their midst, on a Sunday to boot, may have impinged on their susceptibilities. Who knows ?

All of which brings me, finally, to the occasion when I recently stood before a simple and unpretentious war memorial standing alone by the gate of a village school. Clearly the site had been selected with discretion so that the youthful scholars who passed there daily might grasp the ineffable meaning of personal sacrifice.

It was a novel experience to be thus reminded of the great turmoil in a small agricultural centre many miles from civilisation.

Perhaps that rustic cenotaph had long since been relegated to the limbo of rustic memories, but the sight of a big horse standing beside it with a strange rider recording the inscription may possibly have awokened a dormant martial spirit or pensive local pride, for very soon a crowd had collected only too willing to supply all the silent details.

Just for a little time the mind travelled back a dozen years. Old grey beards told the tale with zeal and avidity. Just for a moment one sensed the breath of other surroundings, the unforgettable incidents of other days; and just as surely the light of a higher understanding shone brightly in the eyes of the younger generation, flickered, alas, and then went out as the conversation verged into other channels.

It chanced to be the village bazaar day and a larger crowd than usual had collected. Customers journeying homewards came to blend their voices to the merry laughter and to get a glimpse of the *Sahib*, which, despite all the protestations of the advanced politicians, is still a word to conjure with in agricultural India.

'Let the children see the *Sahib*,' chorused the spokesmen to those who endeavoured to brush the gaping mites aside, 'they cannot get to the big cities, and the *Sahibs can come to us but seldom*.'

Make no mistake, the illiterate though knowledgeable peasant, and particularly the soldier peasant, one of those voiceless thousands who sacrificed their all for the maintenance of British prestige, knows exactly what he is saying.

Maybe that is one of the reasons why the *Sahib* is losing his grip.

## THE SECOND ACT.

BY IBN SABIL.

'IN fiction,' said Bellamy, 'we had been talking about 'adventures,' 'King's Messengers lead a stirring life: continually being set upon, drugged, knocked on the head, and vamped by beautiful sirens who steal their despatches. In cold fact they don't, as I know from practical experience, since I was one for some time before the War. Not much of a screw attached to the job, but with a wound pension acquired in a West African show plus some small private means it carried me along all right in those days. The work? Oh well, I spent a good deal of my time where we are now—cooped up in a railway carriage, only travelling first at Government expense, instead of—as now—third at my own. But never once was I drugged, knocked on the head, or vamped. I only wish I had been—vamped that is. I could have done nicely with a fascinating siren to break the monotony of some of my journeys.'

'But even if nothing happened to you personally, surely strange tales must have reached your ears?' I urged. 'I have it on the authority of quite a number of the best sellers that Embassies and Legations are hotbeds of intrigue and mystery.'

'Well, I can't say that His Britannic Majesty's Representatives ever confided in me as of course they ought to have done. I certainly heard some funny stories from the junior Secretaries in the Chanceries, but the best were under seal of confidence. However, something unusual *did* happen to me; I suppose you could call it an adventure, though it had nothing actually to do with me being a Messenger.'

'Never mind,' I said kindly. 'Even if you didn't lose your despatches we'll say no more about it. Out with the incident.'

'Out with my matches then,' grunted Bellamy, 'which I gave you just now. I want to light my pipe. Thanks. Well—it was in Baku. Just the town for an—incident. There *are* places where one feels like that, you know. In nine cases out of ten nothing happens, but this was the tenth. Baku was a queer town in the old days under the Czarist Government, and I daresay is still queerer now under the Bolsheviks. An oil-field, like a gold-field, has a

way of attracting tough citizens, and in addition the population was largely made up of Tartars and Armenians who went for each other's throats on the slightest provocation. Files of policemen paraded the streets bestrapped with heavy Mauser pistols, outside the Bank was a notice that clients entering armed were liable to be shot on sight, and inside sat a couple of guards, their rifles across their knees to show that the notice meant business.

'I had come to Baku from London via Petersburg, as it was called then, with a bag for our Teheran Legation, the latter arranging with our Baku Consul for the conveyance of the bag onward. This was about 11 a.m. I was bound back to London via Belgrade, and the next express with decent connections did not leave till 10.30 p.m. giving me a rest which I badly needed. There had been a lot of emergency work lately. One of those international crises which finally exploded in the War was rumbling, the F.O. was toiling overtime, the wires were hot, and we Messengers were being shot about Europe like stones from a catapult. I drove to the Consulate and handed over the bag for forwarding to Teheran.

"Look here," said the Consul, "I wish I could have you to dinner to-night, but I'm dining out with some Russian friends. I tell you what I'll do, though. I'll meet you at the station with the return bag which I have here for you."

'I murmured a polite protest as to "spoiling his evening."

"Not a bit; quite the contrary. You know what these Russians are. Delightful people, but they sit up so infernally late, and expect their guests to do likewise, feel hurt if one departs before 1 a.m. at the earliest. I've been worked off my legs lately, and what I want more than anything is a good night in bed." (He certainly looked rather pallid.) "Your bag will give me a cast-iron excuse. My hosts live almost next door and the station is not far off. I'll tear myself away at about ten, pop round here, get your bag out of safe, hand it over to you on the departure platform at ten-fifteen, and be in bed by ten-thirty! I daresay you won't be sorry to be parted from the bag for a bit?"

'I wasn't at all sorry. It was true that nobody had ever tried to steal the blessed thing, but it was a responsibility all the same, and I was heartily glad to put off taking it over—even for a few hours. So I thanked the obliging Consul, drove on to the Hotel Caucase, and went into *déjeuner*. The restaurant was full, one fed well at the Caucase, and seeing a table with only a single occupant, a man, I sat down. The fellow manifestly did not relish my pre-

sence, gave me almost a scowl, and ignored the little bow I gave him—Continental fashion. He had a bloated sort of face, an Albino complexion with hardly any eyebrows, an underhung jaw, and protruding eyes. Altogether a nasty piece of work. Kept fidgeting in his seat, and—with his head tucked over his plate—from time to time peered round the room as if looking for somebody, and somebody who wasn't a friend either. Towards the end of *déjeuner* I thought he had found the somebody. The door of the restaurant swung open and a woman entered, half turned from us for a few seconds while picking out a table. I heard a stifled gasp from the man opposite. His face livid, his eyes bulging and bloodshot, his shoulders hunched, he was crouching in his chair like—like some beastly toad about to spring. I've seen unpleasant expressions on men's faces, now and then, but his was about the worst. Then the woman turned towards us as she passed on, and the Toad—as I called him mentally—sank back breathing heavily. Evidently her back view had deceived him for a moment. He glanced at me, but I was looking at the woman, who was short, middle-aged, plain. If his "friend" was like that she was nothing to make a fuss about that I could see. The resemblance had, however, spoilt the Toad's appetite. He sat staring at his plate, eating nothing, and occasionally taking a drink with a shaking hand. I finished my lunch, and left the table. Just as I reached the door he brushed past me, wrenched it open, and shot through. So violent were his movements that something heavy in his coat-pocket bumped against the door-handle, the pocket-flap flew up for a second, and in the pocket I saw a .45 automatic. The next instant the door was slammed in my face, and when I got into the hall the Toad's back was rapidly disappearing through the street entrance of the hotel. I shrugged my shoulders. Whether the Toad went armed or not was not my affair, and I was in Baku, which impressed me as a place where the more one minded one's own business the better.

"I came in that evening, after an exploration of Baku on foot—these long tramps were sometimes the only exercise I could get when on tour—to find Michel, the ubiquitous out-porter of the Caucase, waiting for me, who said he would precede me to the station with my baggage, take my ticket, and engage me a place in the train. I handed over my effects to him, including my special passport as *Courrier Diplomatique*, an Open Sesame with railway authorities all over Europe, and paid my bill at the desk. I hate

being rushed with these sort of things at the last moment ; don't you ? Then I went into dinner, taking my hat and coat with me, instead of leaving them in the hall to be a temptation for the patrons of the hotel. I was thus completely mobilised to leave at a moment's notice, a point of some importance in view of what happened later.

'It's curious how one forms habits on the shortest provocation, and instinctively I looked round for what I regarded as *my* table—the one I had lunched at. It was, as previously, occupied by a single diner, but this time a woman, and as it seemed the nearest offering a vacant seat I proceeded to take it. Walking up the room I had a vague feeling that the woman's back view was somehow familiar, but when I sat down, my bow—unlike that to the Toad at lunch—being politely returned, I found her to be a complete stranger. I'm no hand at describing women, and all I can say is that she was middle-aged and plain, almost—perhaps quite—ugly. And yet—there was something about her ; in fact there was a devil of a lot about her. I soon felt that. Curious how quickly one senses an unusual character, isn't it ? '

'Very curious,' I said.

Bellamy relit his pipe, and after a pause continued slowly.

'For one thing she was extraordinarily immobile. Most people, you must have noticed it, are always fidgeting, moving their hands, their feet, shifting in their seats, and so forth. I daresay half the satisfaction in smoking, for instance, lies in the excuse for moving one's hands and fingers. But she sat quite still, a sign I believe of exceptional self-control. What the colour of her eyes was I don't remember, but she had a very direct glance, a cool impassive glance which took you in and weighed you up, the sort of glance you get from a doctor or from a new Chief at your first interview, but not the sort of glance you expect from a woman.

'Unlike the waiter I had had at lunch, who knew some French, the one I had now could only articulate "oui" and "non" with a bad imitation of a Parisian shrug, and as I knew no Russian we were soon in difficulties over the dinner. The lady, who had watched our verbal antics with polite amusement, intervened in English with an offer of help, which of course I accepted, and she forthwith took firm charge, as I imagine she would have of any situation.

"This," holding the menu, written in Russian, in one of her rather broad, strong hands, and speaking in a deep, 'throaty,' rather attractive voice, "was fresh caviare. What about begin-

ning with that ? And this was *bortsch* soup, served with meat patties. And this was sturgeon just caught in the Caspian—*spécialité de la maison*, or *de la ville* one might say. I oughtn't to miss that. And this was a Kromeski, and so forth. And as for wines. Well—vodka with the caviare ? And to follow so and so, and so and so ? " In short, she ordered an excellent dinner, efficiently and quickly.

'After this we began talking—naturally enough. I'm a gregarious creature, and in my long solitary journeys over Europe was only too pleased to pick up chance conversations with anyone I met. Casually I had put her down as ugly, but now I noticed that she had a swift charming smile that made her what the French call *jolie laide*. Rather a fascinating type that ? '

'Yes,' I agreed. 'I suppose it's partly the contrast, and partly the unexpectedness. It's certainly much rarer than ordinary prettiness.'

'Well,' continued Bellamy, 'a Russian dinner is a long affair, with waits between the courses when you smoke those small yellow Russian cigarettes, and we talked of this and that, did Jolie Laide and I, always excluding of course politics. One never talked politics with strangers in old Russia under the Czar, any more I suppose than one talks them to-day in new Russia under the Bolsheviks. Otherwise we covered a good deal of ground, small talk, life in general, books, mostly Russian novels of which I had read some translations. She had a keen, intelligent mind, and I enjoyed our conversation. She was a lady and English too, I soon saw that, though indeed every now and then one would almost say she was a foreigner speaking English "perfectly" from the way she stressed her *r*'s instead of slurring them over. English people who "go" Continental—so to speak—sometimes get into that habit.'

'Finally, following some subject that had cropped up, I said : "You know, every now and then, one wants intensely the exactly opposite of whatever may be one's ordinary line of business. In my present job I'm continually on the move ; what I want just at the moment is the most sedentary existence possible."

'Jolie Laide smiled. "An office stool from nine to five ? I don't think you'd like it long. But I agree with your theory."

'"What would you like yourself ?"

'She hesitated : "Oh. Monotony and—security."

'The last word seemed to have slipped out unawares. She looked at me sharply, but though I felt surprise I did not show it. Security ? If that was the opposite to her ordinary way of life, did

Jolie Laide then "live dangerously." I glanced at her. The waiter had just cleared away a course, and she was sitting, immobile as usual, her hands in her lap, looking straight in front of her. Quiescent like this, with expressionless face, she lost for the moment her charm and force of character, and relapsed into an ordinary, rather ugly, middle-aged woman. The idea of her "living dangerously" almost made me smile; she seemed entrenched in an atmosphere of security. Then suddenly, without any warning, just as I was about to make a remark, her gaze expanded in a dreadful stare, she drew in a sharp breath, remained rigid for a moment, and collapsed in her chair.

"Well, I'm damned!" I said. "What on earth did you do?"

"Nothing," said Bellamy. "If something or other had given her a shock, she certainly passed it on to me. One moment sitting there placidly, and the next all crumpled up, her head fallen on her breast, her eyes shut, her face a sort of whitish grey. And the certainty that it was no trifle that had made her faint—she was not that sort—shocked me all the more.

"To understand what follows you must visualise the Caucasus restaurant, a long room with a door at either end, one leading into the hotel and the other into the street. There were three rows of tables, and two of pillars, three of each, and our table was next the wall on the left-hand side as you faced the hotel door, behind the central pillar. I was seated with my back to the pillar, with Jolie Laide facing me.

"In a few seconds she stirred, set her teeth, raised her head rigidly in a series of jerks as if lifting a weight on the back of her neck, and opened her eyes. It reminded me of a boxer knocked out in a glove fight forcing himself to come round before the final count.

"He's here," she muttered to herself, hoarsely and half unconsciously, "Oh, my God, he's here."

"A cold shiver went through me; in those few words spoken in that broken whisper was absolute despair. Her eyes though now open were fixed on the table, but before she collapsed had been looking over my right shoulder. I turned my head in the same direction. Everything appeared normal. Our fellow-diners, rightly absorbed in the important business of eating and drinking, paid no attention to us, and the incident at our table, so quickly did the lady recover from her collapse, had apparently passed unnoticed. The pillar at my back, however, obstructed my view. I peered round it, and there at a table on the far side of the room sat the

Toad. I only caught a glimpse of him, but he looked more beastly than ever, staring straight at our table, smiling, licking his lips, gloating. . . .

‘And I thought to myself, “O Lord, I’m going to get mixed up in a scene.” Foreigners don’t mind scenes in public places; I think they sometimes rather enjoy them. But we hate them; I suppose it’s our self-consciousness. Then it flashed across me why, when entering the restaurant, I had thought Jolie Laide’s back view to be familiar: it resembled very closely that of the woman who had upset the Toad at lunch. *And* he went armed, *and* Jolie Laide had fainted at seeing him. I thought to myself with a sort of sinking, sickish feeling, “This is going to be much worse than a scene,” and cursed the chance that had taken me to that table. Not very heroic perhaps, but that’s how I felt.

‘Jolie Laide lifted her eyes from the table; they had a desperate hunted look.

‘“There’s a man over there who—” she hesitated, “who may shoot me.”

‘Her colour had begun to return, and her voice had scarcely a tremor in it as she made this amazing statement. Amazing, that is to say, in itself. As things were, of course I was not much surprised; it merely increased my perturbation.

‘“Yes,” I replied, “I know.”

‘She looked astonished, opened her mouth to ask a question, and then stopped. She wasn’t the sort of person to waste time on unessentials in an emergency. For some inscrutable reason, and what a relief it must have been to her, I was prepared to accept her extraordinary statement. So much to the good. Now for the next step. She frowned, thinking deeply, and then leant forward:

‘“I want your help. I *must* get out of this room alive. And not only for my own sake. There are others. . . .”

‘I said nothing. The whole affair had completely bowled me over. I could only speculate in a foolish sort of way that even if the Toad failed to put an end to *me*, he and Jolie Laide between them would probably put an end to my official career. If I survived the incident I could see myself up on the F.O. mat all right for being implicated in a café brawl in bad company! For all I knew Jolie Laide might be a most notorious female.

‘“Well?” she said impatiently. “Well?”

‘I nodded: “All right.”

‘“Thank you.” Her voice quivered a little, almost broke.

Then she went on firmly, " If I move he'll shoot, and he's a good shot. But if you cover me to the street door that will give me a chance. Directly you get up I'll make a dash. When we're outside the door you turn to the right ; I'll turn to the left."

' By Jove, that woman had nerve. She was within an ace of sudden death, and she was almost as calm as if planning a picnic. I glanced down the room. The street door seemed miles away, but we had a clear run for it, with one pillar in between which would give us some cover. Without turning, very cautiously with my left hand I unhooked my overcoat and hat from the pillar behind me. Then I hesitated. A wave of funk swept over me. I felt so safe behind that fat, friendly pillar. . . .

' Jolie Laide leant forward :

" ' For God's sake.' "

' I set my teeth and stood up, and she was out of her seat and scuttling to the next pillar with me after her. An undignified exit ; we must have looked as if we were trying to evade our bills. I heard a shout behind me, I suppose from the Toad, but the pillar gave us a vital half-second of cover, and then we were half-way to that blessed door. Jolie Laide was quite right ; so far I had masked the Toad's fire. But now, desperate at seeing his prey escape, he must have let fly, for there was an appalling bang—ever heard a pistol fired in a room ?—and a chug as a bullet buried itself in the door. The next instant we had hurled ourselves through it, were outside, and had started running in our opposite directions.

' It was a filthy night, thank goodness, dark as pitch, pouring cats and dogs, and nobody in the little side street on which the door opened. About twenty yards ahead of me the street opened into one of the main boulevards. I turned up it, stopped running and put on my hat and coat. If the Toad, of whom, however, I saw no sign, happened to pursue my way, he couldn't recognise me from any other pedestrian. I hailed a passing droski, told the driver to go to the station, and hopped in.'

Bellamy stopped, leant back, yawned, and stretched himself with an air of finality.

' Well ? ' I prompted after a pause. ' Well——'

' That's all '

' That's all ! But——'

' I know what you want to say. Did Jolie Laide get away ? And who was she ? And what happened next ? And so forth and so on. As far as I was concerned nothing happened next, I'm

thankful to say. At the station I took over the bag from the Consul, and my traps from Michel, and got into the Wagon Lit. I confess I passed a damnable anxious time till the express started, and again later when crossing the frontier. But everything was serene. After all, nobody had been killed, or even wounded, and a few bullets flying about a Baku restaurant were neither here nor there. The only person who suffered was the proprietor of the restaurant who was two dinner bills short.

‘As for Jolie Laide, I never saw or heard of her from that day to this, and who she was I know no more than the Man in the Moon. She may have been an anarchist, and the Toad an agent of the Russian Political Police, or vice versa she may have been a Police agent, whom the anarchists had spotted, and the Toad may have been the individual told off to do her in. She may have been one of our Secret Service people, or a fugitive from justice, or an erring wife with the Toad as husband or lover. For all I know I may have been quite wrong to help her, but I don’t think so. There was something about her. . . . Anyhow, she had guts and nerve, and I take off my hat to her. Whether she got clear from the Toad of course I don’t know, but I hope so, and I also hope that *he* in due course came to a very sticky end. He was a nasty fellow, and gave me about the worst *mauvais quart d’heure* I’ve ever had.’

We were silent for a minute. Then :

‘You scribble a bit,’ said Bellamy, ‘don’t you?’

I pleaded guilty.

‘Then make a story out of what I’ve told you. You can have it free, gratis and for nothing.’

‘Thanks very much.’ I hesitated a moment, considering it in my mind’s eye.

‘Oh! All right,’ said Bellamy huffily. ‘Of course I know the story isn’t what you want. Jolie Laide ought to have been a “Russian Princess” beautiful as a cinema star; and I ought to have been madly in love with her; and that damned dago ought to have plugged either one or both of us; and—’

‘My dear fellow,’ I interposed hastily, ‘I didn’t mean that. I think yours is a jolly good story, much better as it actually happened than if it had been full of “stock” Russian princesses and all that sort of stuff. I was just trying to think of a title for it.’

‘H’m,’ said Bellamy somewhat mollified, ‘that’s rather a teaser, isn’t it? Hullo, we’re getting into town,’ and he gazed as if for inspiration at the grubby purlieus of Waterloo which, as the train

slackened speed, passed slowly by. 'I've got it,' he exclaimed. 'I remember once, when passing through Paris on one of my tours, dropping in at a theatre in the middle of a play. I had to catch a *rapide* and only saw one Act. It was a curious sensation watching the players doing all sorts of things for reasons completely hidden from me, and having to leave before the end. Well—that's just the difference, isn't it? between real life and a story. In the latter everything is neatly tied up from beginning to end. In real life one often only sees a bit, sometimes the beginning, sometimes the end, sometimes—as apparently I did at the Caucase—the middle. What about calling the story "The Second Act"?'

'Yes, that's good. But look here, Bellamy, this isn't fair. After all, it's your yarn, and even your title. Why not write it yourself?'

We slid into the station, and Bellamy rose to take his suitcase from the rack.

'What! Write it myself? Not much. I don't mind *telling* a yarn, but I can't sit down and write it all out on paper. No; you write the story and call it "The Second Act."'

And I have.

## BATTLES LONG AGO.

## WAR AGAINST FAIRYLAND.

IT was bound to happen again. Nothing is more certain than that a schoolmaster will dig up a platitude and call it a discovery. After all, a good pedagogue should be always learning. And so it is natural that the Teachers' College of Columbia University (in the United States, where a moral sense still flourishes) should have found out the truth about fairyland. It has discovered that Titania's kingdom is 'ridiculous.' Its history is useless, and must be banished utterly from the nurseries of intelligent democracy.

It is possible that this stern academy has not studied very closely the past relations between education and folk-lore. Had it done so, it would have perceived that its decision will never be enforced and is not in the smallest degree original. Exceptionally right-minded persons have always disapproved of fairies. But no public demonstration of belief (as in *Peter Pan*) has yet been needed to save them from extinction. On the other hand, persons of eminence have been known to say that fairyland is not what it was, and (as against the moralists) to deplore its decadence. You would think that, one way or the other, elves and ogres, sprites, witches, gnomes must be hard put to it to continue in their old fortress of mankind's imagination. But they are there still, whatever Columbia says.

The odd thing about their survival is that all attacks upon them or doubts about them have been inconsistent, though the principles laid down by the Teachers' College have cropped up fairly frequently. One of the oldest authorities, Dame Alison of Bath, was convinced that many generations before her time, in the days of King Arthur,

‘All was this land fulfuld of fayerye.  
The elf-queen, with her joly compayne,  
Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede.’

But after that spacious epoch there came the priests and friars, and drove out the little people. Happily she was able to recollect one tale of those forgotten days. Columbia University, no doubt, perceives with satisfaction that it contains a distinct moral, as well as the best definition of a gentleman ever written. There must have been some tiny spark of good in the chronicles of fairyland to

produce such a narrative from the author of that astonishing catalogue of husbands, the Wife of Bath's Prologue.

It might have been thought that with the Reformation the persecution of fairies by monks would cease. Perhaps it did. Yet new presbyter was but old priest. In Elizabeth's own spacious reign a standard book on the education of children uttered a solemn warning: 'Keep them from reading of feigned fables, vain fantasies, and wanton stories, which bring much mischief to youth.' It is sufficiently clear, however, that Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, to mention no others, managed to get at the forbidden knowledge; and they show little trace of having been influenced by the 'good godly books' recommended as an alternative. The next two or three generations, perhaps—though Milton also had some tincture of fairy lore, and indeed meditated the subject of King Arthur for his epic—fell more definitely into the power of godliness. Thomas White, in his *Little Book for Little Children*, was quite explicit. His pupils were to read 'no ballads or foolish books, but treatises of death, and hell, and judgment.' Such works (and there were many) contained long and detailed accounts of martyrdoms: in particular, the very painful martyrdoms of young children. By an odd irony, there crept into one of them the most famous of all nursery alphabets—'A was an Archer, and shot at a frog.' According to the *Manchester Guardian*, America has changed all that. 'In future A, instead of standing for acorn or apple-pie, will stand for adding machines and axles, and other letters will have similarly practical significance.' But the Puritans' ideal was not practical. They wished to see, as the sub-title of John Bunyan's book for children states, 'temporal things spiritualised':

'to show them how each fingle-fangle,  
On which they doting are, their souls entangle.'

If such a policy was likely to be hard on the fairies, and to render life a trifle arduous, it was at least not unromantically matter-of-fact. Mr. Gradgrind would never have backed it.

But the era of Bunyan did not wholly settle the issue between fairy tales and the faith, even for the time being. A bishop and a great iconoclast both saw (from very different points of view) a connection between old legends and the old religion. Mr. Thomas Hobbes, of Malmesbury, Gent., decided that the Papal system was equivalent to 'the Kingdom of Fairies; that is, to the old wives' Fables in England, concerning Ghosts and Spirits, and the feats

they play.' He knew all about their skimming the cream from milk, and introducing changelings into happy homes, and vanishing from mortal sight. Indeed, in his famous Chapter XLVII of *Leviathan* ('Of the Kingdom of Darkness'), he claimed a wider and more unseemly knowledge than most fairy-lovers would care to admit. 'The fairies marry not.' But—'The priests also marry not . . .' The passage is the supreme example of aposiopesis in the language.

Richard Corbet, on the other hand, was faced with an awkward theological problem. As an Anglican prelate—he filled successively the sees of Oxford and Norwich—he could neither speak ill of religion (which was no uncongenial task to Hobbes) nor admit the claims of Rome. And he was robustly conservative, with a natural belief in fairies. In his famous poem on them, he asserted that they left England (not quite completely) at the Reformation, because they

' were of the old profession ;  
Their songs were Ave Maries,  
Their dances were procession.'

However, his wise servant, William Churne of Staffordshire, preserved in his 'noddle' some knowledge of the lost magic. He saved the bishop from its power on one occasion. Corbet and a friend, setting out on an 'Iter Boreale,' were, as another poem tells us, bewitched and hopelessly lost in the woods near Cole Orton. William broke the spell :

' Turn your cloaks,'  
Quoth he, ' for Puck is busy in these oaks.'

They turned their cloaks, and in a trice found themselves in the right way.

Obviously, therefore, the cheerful bishop could not bid farewell to rewards and fairies. Indeed, he powerfully aided their cause, according to a pleasant story. He found once at Abingdon Fair a ballad-monger (true remembrancer of the old learning) who could not persuade the folk to buy his wares. Up got the bishop promptly on to the steps of the town cross, and sang the rhymes. 'Being a handsome man, and a rare full voice [sic], he presently vended a great many, and had a great audience.'

Perhaps the deed was not exactly canonical. But it was in keeping with Corbet's lively character. There is a well-known tale

of his ability to distinguish between his episcopal and his human natures. He took his chaplain one day down to his cellar, and locked the door. Then he solemnly put off his hood (' there layes the doctor ') and his gown (' there layes the bishop '), and they fell to a good steady drinking bout. It is not surprising that he was the close friend of such oddities as Coryat (of the *Crudities*) and John Taylor, the Water Poet. But he was also intimate with Sir Thomas Bodley.

His succour of the ballad-monger is more significant than it looks at first sight. It was only in the cheap and often nasty wares of Autolycus the pedlar that the authentic folk-lore of England survived in print. And to some extent the Puritans (and later moralists as well) were justified in attacking these humble tales. Apart from the drawbacks of bad print and ugly woodcuts (which did duty over and over again for a diversity of scenes), the chapbooks offered a text which was often coarse and obscene. So, it is true, was and is much of our vernacular. But one does not have to be a school-teacher to desire to mitigate it.

However, in that fashion Guy of Warwick, Jack the Giant-Killer, Tom Thumb, Hickathrift and other less desirable heroes were preserved to us. They would probably have lived by other means, all the same ; and that is where Columbia University errs, even though the vast spread of learning through print has weakened folk-memory and oral tradition. It is startling to find how tenacious of detail that memory was. Shakespeare, for instance, quotes 'Fee-fi-fo-fum,' and the grim story of Mr. Fox, verbatim ; and it is extremely unlikely that he ever saw those tales in print. Still more remarkable is a phrase in *Lear*—' rats and mice and such small deer ' (' deer ' is ' thiere,' beasts). This was certainly not in print in his day. It comes literally from the Middle Age romance of *Bevis of Southampton*, which was first printed from MS. only in the nineteenth century. Somehow, somewhere, the old tales, the old rhymes, the old fables were handed on living through the lips of men.

But they were not deemed respectable—their enemies saw to that—until the polite society of another nation made them so. Charles Perrault's *Tales of Mother Goose* (published in France in 1697, and Englished, probably, in 1729) made the fairies court favourites, and Madame d'Aulnois added to their glory. There is no strong reason to doubt Perrault's claim that they were the stories told to his son by an old nurse : *Cinderella* (*Cendrillon*), *The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood* (it should be *The Beauty in the Sleeping Wood*),

and *Red Riding Hood* are much too good not to be true. But though they conquered severe critics, they had to apologise for their existence, so to speak. They appeared with 'moralities.' 'What large teeth you have, grandmamma . . .' The French version comments :

‘ tous les loups  
Ne sont pas de la même sorte . . .  
Mais hélas ! qui ne sait que ces loups doucereux  
De tous les loups sont les plus dangereux ? ’

And England echoed faithfully—

‘ Wolves too sure there are  
Of every sort and every character.’

All that can be said of such 'moralities' is that they are not nearly so far-fetched as those appended by monks, centuries before, to the primeval stories of the *Gesta Romanorum*, and that children (as Mr. Isaac Bickerstaff hints in *The Tatler*) probably paid no attention to them. Modern science adds a different sort of moral. It traces the tales back through analogues in countless tongues to the very infancy of mankind itself.

Gammer Gurton, Mother Bunch, Mother Goose—they were well established by the time George III came to the throne and expressed the hope that every child in his realm should at least be taught to read the Bible. Their resources were increased by recruits never meant for the nursery—Gulliver, Robinson Crusoe, and all the genies of Araby—just as Guy, the Seven Champions, Don Belianis and others had been gathered from works originally meant for older readers. It would have been vain to attack them (except for the crudity of the text) on grounds of mere morality.

At least, one would have thought it vain. Yet the attack was made, and made as never before, nor (till 1929) since. In 1802 the kindly yet vehement Sarah Trimmer, of Brentford—'good Mrs. Trimmer,' as Calverley called her—decided that Britain was in danger; an opinion often held, but seldom supported by evidence so unusual. Of course the French Revolution provided the overwhelming proof of peril. The Encyclopædistes were engaged in a vast conspiracy against Christianity, especially against the English presentation of it. (Mrs. Trimmer, it should be said, shared whole-heartedly Mr. Square's view—'When I mention religion, I mean the Christian religion; and not only the Christian religion, but the

Protestant religion ; and not only the Protestant religion, but the Church of England'). She therefore constituted herself *The Guardian of Education*, and for three years conducted a magazine under that title, in which she reviewed, for the benefit of parents, all publications bearing upon education or meant for children.

It was a large and brave enterprise, but she had a good reputation as a writer for children. Her *History of the Robins* (the original title was *Fabulous Histories designed for the Instruction of Children*) was deservedly famous, and her series of Scripture and other prints, with appropriate notes, was in great demand. Her campaign, however, carried her farther than perhaps she intended. She became embroiled with the good Quaker Joseph Lancaster, whose system of education led to the establishment of the British and Foreign School Society and (in opposition) the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Children of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church—the two pillars of our voluntary system of elementary education. Her polemics against Lancaster brought her to the notice of the *Edinburgh Review*, and drew from Sydney Smith some passages of invective not easily equalled. This 'uncandid and feeble lady,' he wrote, 'seems to suppose, because she has dedicated her mind to the subject, that her opinion must necessarily be valuable upon it ; forgetting it to be barely possible, that her application may have made her more wrong, instead of more right.' She was, he said, 'a lady of respectable opinions, and very ordinary talents ; defending what is right without judgment, and believing what is holy without charity.' That is severe enough in all conscience, though Mrs. Trimmer had a pretty thick armour of rectitude. But George III read the criticism, and liked it so much that he had it read to him twice over : and that—

However, it shows the importance of Mrs. Trimmer. As she passed from the comparatively easy task of attacking Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot, and any French or German writer on education—Germany being involved through the vileness of Basedow's 'Philanthropine'—she made some terrible discoveries about things she had once loved. Looking back, she well remembered, 'as the delight of our childish days, *Mother Goose's Fairy Tales* ; Esop [sic] and Gay's *Fables* ; *The Governess, or Little Female Academy*, by Mrs. Fielding.' Still, the memory was not bitter—at first. Such books did not at once seem harmful. They were merely 'calculated to entertain the imagination, rather than to improve the heart, or cultivate the understanding.' It was not till one of her numerous

correspondents bristled that she realised her own undue leniency. *Cinderella*, wrote this lady, whose name is not given, 'is perhaps one of the most exceptionable books that was ever written for children. . . . It paints some of the worst passions that can enter into the human breast, and of which [sic] little children should, if possible, be totally ignorant ; such as envy, jealousy, a dislike to mothers-in-law and half-sisters, vanity, a love of dress, etc., etc.'

Poor Sarah Trimmer. Only one issue before she had commended a book published by Newbery, a fairy-tale called *Robin Goodfellow*, as both entertaining and instructive—though of course 'care should be taken to make children understand that fairies are imaginary beings.' And now, in view of a letter from one who (she had to admit) 'appears to be so good a judge of what children *ought* and *ought not* to read,' she had to banish *Cinderella*. A little later Sarah Fielding's *Governess* was sacrificed : it is 'in some respects very exceptionable.' *Robinson Crusoe* must stay marooned : his history might lead to 'an early taste for a rambling life, and a desire of adventures.' '*The Children in the Wood* is absolutely unfit for the perusal of children'—and in *The Robins* she had praised the birds for covering the poor babes with leaves ! All Mother Goose's and Mother Bunch's tales, henceforth, were 'only fit to fill the heads of children with confused notions of wonderful and supernatural events, brought about by the agency of imaginary beings.' But she refused to condemn dolls and toy tea-things.

She represented the strait Church standpoint. She had two independent allies, outside her own circle. One was Robert Bloomfield, the unhappy author of *The Farmer's Boy*. In the intervals between struggling with the patronage of Capel Loftt and making Aeolian harps, he wrote a child's book called *The History of Little Davy's New Hat* ; it was published by my Quaker ancestors, who had also issued some of Lancaster's dreadful undenominational treatises. Bloomfield compiled this artless little story because he had been brought up on *Jack the Giant-Killer*, and had now remarked its 'abominable absurdities.'

The other was the redoubtable historian of *The Fairchild Family*. Mrs. Sherwood 'edited'—entirely re-wrote, in fact—the once-loved *Governess* of Sarah Fielding. 'Several' (two) fairy-tales had formed part of the original work (which, in its description of Mrs. Teachum, the governess, shows something of Henry Fielding's own humour). The editor 'admitted' one of them. 'But some fanciful productions of this sort can never be rendered generally useful' (hail,

Columbia !), 'it has been thought proper to suppress the rest, substituting in their place such appropriate relations as seemed more likely to conduce to juvenile edification.' As a matter of fact, the fairy-tale 'admitted' is an entirely new one, about a Princess Rosalinda, who attained happiness by the aid of a Fairy Serena, a companion (seen in a mirror) named Soimeme, and toys made by 'an old fairy called Content': characters certainly conduced to edification.

The moral tale was then omnipresent, though Roscoe's *Butterfly's Ball*, Mrs. Dorset's *Peacock at Home*, Lamb's *Prince Dorus*, and similar pieces of levity stood up gallantly against numbers. The attack faded away. *The Guardian of Education* disappeared in 1806. And twenty years later (1824-26) Grimm's *Popular Stories* were translated into English. The war—in Great Britain—was over. But it is a singular proof of the danger of being a fairy-tale that the first and greatest illustrator of Grimm—George Cruikshank himself—in his later years, turned moralist and broke into the fairy-garden—'a Whole Hog of unwieldy dimensions,' as his friend Dickens was fain to call him. It was not, however, so much enmity against the fairies as zeal in another cause that inspired him. He was, at that period of his life, a violent teetotaller, and he turned the tales into temperance tracts. When Cinderella was to be married, 'all the wine, beer, and spirits in the place were collected together, and piled upon the top of a rocky mound in the vicinity of the palace, and made a great bonfire of on the night of the wedding.' Even Mrs. Trimmer's correspondent, with all her anxiety about 'mothers-in-law,' never thought of that.

Fairy-tales need no defence. Austere students of psychology know their value. They are part of man's age-long history. They may seem ridiculous to school-marms in the country which has produced fundamentalism. But the same country also produced Brer Fox and Uncle Remus. It is not the fairies who will get the ridicule.

F. J. HARVEY DARTON.

### THE HALL OF A HUNDRED SKULLS.

IT is said that Truth is stranger than Fiction, and this is not so very surprising after all, for surely it is a much rarer commodity! Truth in unfamiliar guise, however, may easily be mistaken for the spurious article, wherefore the author of this narrative warns the reader beforehand that the story is built largely upon facts, how largely he does not care to say, knowing that he would probably be disbelieved.

The scene is New Guinea, the most savage island in the world. . . . A prospecting expedition was toiling strenuously along a deep-cleft gorge that tore down from the barrier ranges which marked the limit of what is now called the Mandated Territory. Two white men led the way, stepping from boulder to boulder on the edge of the swift-flowing stream, and frequently floundering waist-deep in the yellow waters.

After them followed a dozen native 'carriers' bearing on their backs miscellaneous mining tools and stores, and behind these again came three more representatives of the Anglo-Saxon Race keeping a watchful eye on the black-skinned but human beasts of burden directly ahead, who were thus sandwiched between the advance and rearguard of the party.

And at this stage there was need for the 'carriers' to be kept under strict surveillance. They belonged to a coastal tribe, and now they knew they were in enemy country. The fierce Papangis of the mountains had no love for their brethren of the plains, at least not until they were ceremoniously boiled! Therefore these poor unfortunates were excusably nervous. They hesitated often, casting fearful glances around, but always the threats of the stern-faced men coming rapidly up behind encouraged the timid tribesmen to further spasmodic effort.

Tindale, the grim hard-bitten and acid-voiced Australian, looked back angrily from time to time with a curse on his lips.

'Darn these blasted nigs!' he grumbled. 'What in Hell's the matter with them?'

His neighbour, an erect soldierly figure with a thoughtful, almost brooding, cast of countenance, made no reply. Indeed he seemed to have forgotten the existence of Tindale, a condition

of affairs which began to annoy the latter individual very considerably. The silent one was a bit of a mystery to Tindale—and Tindale hated mysteries! He had the reputation of understanding the New Guinean savage better than any man alive. He could speak the dialects like a native, and he was known to have penetrated the wilds where no white man had ever been before. And yet he was a strange commingling of strength and weakness. While in the little township on the coast he would drink gin immoderately, and talk in a language which nobody understood—and it was then that the supercilious Oxford drawl was most noticeable! Here in the Ranges he was equally un-understandable, for he refused to talk at all; and he almost ignored Tindale, who was the leader of the party!

Tindale could stand it no longer.

'Curse it, Challoner!' he broke out. 'Ain't you got nothing more to say than a bloody graven image?'

'Not much—to you, Tindale,' came the unexpected response. 'Our methods of handling natives are different, you see, and I can't understand why you should expect the poor devils to carry on cheerfully when they are quite well aware that the Papangis may attack us at any moment—'

'Huh! I reckon five rifles are good enough for all the Paps that are likely to come along. You've got some mighty queer notions about them measly niggers, an' I tell you straight I ain't agreein'—'

John Challoner smiled faintly. 'I scarcely expected that our views would coincide,' he interrupted, and there was a trace of hardness in his voice, 'but you'll be good enough to remember that I did not seek your company. You asked me to join you, and since you were fool enough to insist on imperilling men's lives in the Papangi Ranges I thought I might be of some little service. There *may* be gold in these mountains, but of what use is it to anyone? We cannot mine it at so great a distance from the coast, and our presence in hostile country can only bring about bloodshed—'

'Then what in Hell made you come along?' demanded the other, with rising anger. 'It wasn't for love o' me, I'll bet!'

'God knows!' was the absently spoken reply. 'The craze is in my blood. It is either the Wild places for me or—drink. I fail to understand myself, my friend, so I don't blame you for forming your own conclusions.'

The fiery Tindale laughed, as if he had just recognised a kindred spirit. 'Ain't we all bloody mugs!' he exclaimed. 'Always chasin' after some darn thing or other that isn't there—'

A yell from behind startled them both. A point had been reached where the right bank of the gorge flattened out so that the thick jungle undergrowth stretched down to the edge of the water. The keen eyes of the carriers had seen their chance, and already the frightened natives were fleeing into the shelter of the timber as if a thousand demons were in pursuit.

The roar which Tindale gave appeared only to have the effect of making the fugitives run the faster. The three men barring the backward passage were cursing impotently. They had been traversing a fairly deep pool when the diversion occurred, and their sodden shoes were as lumps of lead on their feet, impeding any attempt at hasty movement. Then one of them, Red Scar Harry by name, raised his rifle.

'They've got our grub, mates!' said he.

Tindale's shot forestalled his by a fraction of a second, and the forest echoed and re-echoed with the dual explosion. Two of the stampeding band screamed, stumbled, then rolled among the grass.

Tindale was about to fire again when suddenly a muscular arm reached out and struck aside the rifle barrel.

'You fool!' spoke a quiet voice in his ear. 'If the Papangis haven't seen us already, you will bring them around like stinging bees. Anyhow, you have no right to murder a native just because he is justifiably afraid—'

Tindale's rage almost choked him. For a moment he seemed about to turn his gun on Challoner. He brought the stock to the ground with an oath.

'Who the Hell are you to interfere?' he cried fiercely.

The other's lips tightened ominously, but he spoke with unruffled calmness.

'I am just a white man, Tindale, whose ideas of justice, I hope, have not yet been warped.'

Never before had Tindale's authority been so challenged, and yet he knew instinctively that this cool-mannered individual whom some called 'Mad Challoner' was no puny rival to be easily overthrown. They faced each other without speaking for some tense seconds; then Tindale turned to meet the rest of the party who had arrived and were already taking sides in the altercation they expected to see precipitated.

Challoner found one supporter among the new-comers, a gaunt but wiry Scotsman named MacCrimmon, who immediately proceeded to lay down the law to his associates with convincing sternness.

'I'm a man o' peace,' he declared, 'but if there's to be any argyfyin' I'm putting my twa fists at the disposal o' my humanitarian friend.'

He held out two mighty arms, and gazed expectantly around.

'Nothin' doing, mate,' growled Red Scar Harry. 'Dog don't eat dog when there are wolves around, an' somethin' tells me that the Papangis will sure make a meal o' us if we don't hit the back trail quick an' lively.'

He had scarcely finished speaking when the measured throbings of many tom-toms began to resound through the forest, and simultaneously the loud wail of a *Bull Roarer* cut piercingly into the air. The dread signal was understood by all. The savages were mustering to attack the hated invaders of their domain.

The five white men bent forward, listening. They hoped to hear the counter-challenge of a rival tribe, which would indicate that the occasion was one of merely internecine strife—for seldom is the country free from this sort of warfare—but it was quickly evident that only one force was there. Already it was advancing.

Tindale spoke jerkily: 'Take cover, boys. . . . Keep a tight grip on your nerves. . . . If they get close it will be all up with us.' He crouched behind the trunk of a sago palm, and with rifle out-thrust prepared to do battle in the only way he knew. There was no yellow streak in Tindale, as all New Guinea knows.

Challoner alone disregarded his advice. He strode to where the stricken natives lay, and examined their wounds hastily. They were demoralised by fear, but their hurts were trifling. At Challoner's command they staggered to their feet and limped back to the gorge, where they feverishly tried to hide among the rocks. Looking about him, Challoner now noticed that the packs of the escaped natives were strewn in the scrub, quite close at hand. They had been discarded so that their owners might run the faster. He seized upon these tell-tale evidences and hurled them into the deeper undergrowth.

Tindale watched him anxiously. The war drums were drawing nearer and nearer. At any moment a hail of arrows might be unloosed.

'For God's sake come back,' he cried. 'I reckon—I reckon I was in the wrong, old man.'

Challoner turned to him, apparently unconcerned. 'The Papangis knew we were here before any shot was fired,' he said. 'I had hoped to get up to the high country before they attacked, for we haven't a chance against them among these trees. Ordinary methods are useless to us now, my friend.'

*Ch-eep! Ch-eep!* The weird, half-guttural war call of the savages burst out from the brushwood a bare hundred yards ahead. Challoner began to move forward with steady step, his rifle loosely balanced in his right hand.

And now Tindale appeared to rave. Wildly he called out: 'Come back, man. You're goin' to certain death. Besides, damn you, you're plum in my range!'

The reply came in perfectly even tones.

'That's a bit of the idea, friend. It's my only hope of saving the party. Whoever fires a shot will be my murderer!'

A wail of bitter grief burst from the lips of MacCrimmon, and he started to slither down from his perch among the branches of a tall betel palm. He, honest fellow, thought he saw a man going deliberately to his doom. There might yet be time to save him from himself! Before he reached the ground, however, he saw the savage horde appear. Painted faces under swaying head-dresses of osprey and Paradise plumes leered from the branches, making a blaze of colour that advanced like a leaping flame.

By a preconcerted signal half a hundred tom-toms beat out their barbaric chorus with suddenly awakened vigour; bow-strings twanged, and spears clashed upon shields. MacCrimmon gazed on the scene as one petrified. The gaudy display seemed like a fantastic pantomime, only he knew that the demons and devils were real!

The 'Mamoose' or Chief, was the first to come into full view. At his heels the High Sorcerer of the tribe progressed with the antics of an uncouth animal, leaping, wriggling, and fawning in turn. Behind pressed the warriors, prancing to the beat of the drums, their eyes glaring, their mouths distorted with horrid grimaces.

On seeing Challoner, a mighty confusion arose among them. They had come to do battle with a strange white tribe, with warriors who slew their enemies with 'magic' fire tubes. They saw but one man, and he stood motionless before them. Of a

sudden the bow-strings of fifty savages drew taut. A moment more and as many barbs would have riddled the breast of the dauntless one. But lo! he spoke, in a language that they knew; he spoke these words of wonder:

*'Lau Kal-ner helaga dirava hanamo Maungbu mai Yagool.'*  
(I Kal-ner, sacred of the gods, give greeting to Chief Maungbu, and the mighty Magician, Yagool.)

MacCrimmon did not understand what had been said. Neither did Tindale, nor the other two who were near. But all saw with amazement that the dreadful Sorcerer cringed before the speaker, that the giant Mamoose held up his hand in token of peace and that the assembled warriors were subdued as if in the presence of one whom they feared exceedingly.

The palaver continued. Yagool, the Sorcerer, was interrogating Challoner. After the first surprise, doubt was returning to the cunning native mind. The name of Kal-ner they knew, for his fame among distant mountain tribes had been borne on the wings of the wind, but who were they who accompanied him, they who crouched like beasts of prey and carried 'magic' weapons in their hands? Were not these white men enemies of the Papangis, who came to slay and should themselves be slain?

Then Challoner countered the Sorcerer with much subtle skill. These men, he explained, were his bodyguard against the evil tribes who made war upon the Papangis. Though their looks were fierce they were in truth as gentle as the doves that cooed in the forest, save when ill threatened their Chief. Then were their thunders unloosed and all living things near perished before the 'magic' that they wrought.

At this stage he turned and addressed Tindale:

'I know you are brave, my friend, but I am to give you a test which you may well consider as beyond reason. Will you, with MacCrimmon, Red Scar Harry, and Sharkey Smith lay down your rifles and stand here with me unarmed before these savages?'

'We'll go through Hell at your word, my son,' spoke the grim Tindale, striding forward. 'I've held up a darn good bunch o' nigs in my time, but I'm cursed if I ever faced a hull flamin' tribe like this. God, man, you've got a nerve like bloody iron!'

Now the result of the strange conference was that Challoner agreed to go as a *Tapu* guest of the fierce Papangis for the passing of a Moon. Well he knew the risks attendant on such a venture,

for should he show any sign of weakness or fear during his sojourn with the tribe, his head would assuredly become the triumphant trophy of the crafty Yagool. And he could not safely decline the dubious honour that was thrust upon him. The vague suspicions of Yagool must be stilled at all costs. Then again, Challoner was not so sure that the prospect of the adventure did not actually please him in some indefinable way!

For one 'moon,' therefore, he would abide with the mountain people, and instil into the mind of the Mamoose as much of the white man's magic as might be wise. He would 'out-sorcer' the official Sorcerer at his own game. Incidentally, if gold existed in these ranges he would certainly find it. This much he promised Tindale, though by now that impetuous gentleman had lost all interest in the quest, and was only concerned for the safety of the daring individual who was coolly trusting himself to the tender mercies of the most savage head-hunting tribe in New Guinea.

Tindale and his three companions of course must go free. This was a condition of the agreement, reached after lengthy argument. Never before had any of these men been so near to death. The sorcerer's bulging eyes gloated upon them. He desired their slaughter; and the impatient warriors were eager to do his will. They waited but the signal . . .

The palaver ended abruptly. One of the wounded carriers who had taken refuge in the creek was discovered by a prowling savage. His captor dragged him forward, with exultant shouts. In vain the poor wretch screamed for mercy. He was slain on the instant with no more compunction than might have been given to a hunted beast of the forest.

'Go!' said Challoner to his companions. He did not look at them, for his intense gaze was upon Yagool. 'Go—without hurry—pick up your rifles—*carelessly*—don't turn your backs—until you reach the gorge.'

They obeyed him, storming inwardly at their impotence. It was MacCrimmon who seemed to linger when once his rifle was in his grip, then slowly he followed the others, his gaunt face twitching, like one in pain.

The blood lust of the savages had been whetted. They pressed forward, clamouring. Would Yagool, even now, gratify their wolfish wish? Instinct struggled within him against something stronger that had strangely arisen in his being. He wrenched his eyes away from the steady gaze of the white man. He went down

on all fours and tore at the grass roots like an animal. His mouth opened wide, showing two rows of jagged black teeth between which red betel juice was streaming. He twisted his body from side to side and moaned as if in agony. . . . The white men were departing. The magic tubes were in their hands. Soon they would be gone! Instinct for a moment triumphed. Yagool straightened himself. His tongue had already formed the word *Alaia!* (Kill), but it was never uttered. It died away in his throat, for the awful eyes of Kal-ner were upon him. Under their glance he writhed. '*Tapu!*' he shrieked at last. The sacred word of the tribe had been spoken. Now were the white men safe against all harm.

'It is well,' said Challoner, in the dialect. 'My will is stronger than thine, O mighty Yagool.'

The Mamoose, standing near, gave a grunt of disappointment, and tapped the ground impatiently with his great stone club. Obviously he had expected further entertainment. Yagool, he thought, had behaved like a baby!

Without doubt Challoner's insight into the native mind was almost uncanny. His knowledge of the dialects certainly made him aware of all that was spoken around him, but this alone could not have saved him on every occasion. The only feasible explanation of his 'gift,' if so it could be called, was that his strong will exercised an hypnotic influence over the savage brain.

In later years men ceased to marvel at his exploits. Even his name became lost in its native pronunciation—'Kal-ner,' and the man himself became a living mystery to his own kind.

Now, when he accompanied the Papangis to their stronghold, he was conscious that the discomfited Sorcerer regarded him with some enmity as well as suspicion. Yagool was indeed far from satisfied to appear before his people in a secondary light. He had a grievance—a professional grievance!—against the audacious visitor, and his crafty brain was even then evolving a scheme by which the 'magic' of the black man should gloriously vindicate itself.

The sun had nearly set when the head-quarters of the tribe was reached. The Mamoose with his warriors made entry to the village with noisy éclat, but Yagool, with sundry lesser magical functionaries, escorted Challoner to a gloomy-looking structure standing alone in a clearing, and some little distance from any other habitation. It was a weird sort of edifice, not unlike a

Chinese pagoda, only it was built of bamboo and thatched with leaves from the *Pandanus* palm. The roof, peaked high in the centre, descended over the flimsy walls like a giant umbrella. There were no windows of any description in the huge room so formed, and the door by which Challoner entered gave no clue as to its presence when closed. Clearly there was not much coming or going in this select establishment !

Within, all was gloom, save where a narrow streak of light filtered down from a 'man-hole' entrance at the apex of the building. Yagool said no word when he ushered his sacred guest into this choice abode. His whole manner was one of abject fear, or grovelling reverence, or both. But there was neither of these qualities in the look he gave Challoner when he departed.

Challoner smiled grimly when left to himself. Well he knew where he had been housed. He was in the *Tapu* hall of the tribe, a chamber of dread wherein the gods and totems and multifarious 'charms' of the Papangis found a resting-place, as well as some particular 'horrors' belonging to Yagool and his sorcerer ancestry.

Where the circle of light shone on the mud-baked floor he found food in abundance: yams, taro, and bread-fruit, young coco-nuts and half-cooked pork. This was the daily 'offering' to the gods.

'I expect I am the only "god" in the place with an appetite!' laughed Challoner; and he helped himself without hesitation.

When his eyes became more accustomed to the semi-darkness he began to look about for the other inmates of the place with keen interest. There they were, facing him in a half circle: horrible demon shapes in all sorts of fantastic attitudes, dummies of dimly imagined deities, and fearsome representations of long-dead warriors—all ranged around like 'properties' in a wax-works. In the background a vague obstruction seemed to stretch across the room and tower towards the ceiling. Gradually to the watcher's gaze it became more distinguishable. Spots of dull light evolved from the shadows, and the 'obstruction' assumed a sinister aspect. It became a spectral curtain of awesome proportions.

Challoner struck a match and, threading his way between the assorted goblins and gods that intervened, inspected the new horror which had swum into his ken. It was a screen of skulls, gaping, grinning skulls, arranged in tiers and suspended by vine tendrils that quivered with the slightest motion. In the eye-sockets dully gleaming pebbles, painted shells, and coloured seeds,

had been promiscuously thrust, so that the grisly lot presented a truly diabolical spectacle.

'Yagool has certainly given me cheerful company,' muttered Challoner, undismayed. 'Now I wonder what Grand Guignol entertainment he has staged for me to-night!'

He reasoned logically that the Sorcerer would not let such an opportunity slip. If Kal-ner was of the gods, now would proof be given. If he were not, the vengeance of the tribe would fall upon him speedily! Challoner's reflections were not discomfiting. This was the kind of adventure he loved. Still, he did not under-estimate the power of his adversary, and therein did he show his courage and strength. Soon, he expected, the gods and warriors assembled would speak to him!

He lit his pipe, sat down cross-legged on the floor facing the terrifying effigies, and—waited. By and by his head drooped and he began to breathe deeply as if in slumber. And now from behind the phalanx of skulls came a scarcely perceptible murmur, like the rustling of leaves in the wind. At the same time a cool draught of air actually blew in the face of the supposed sleeper. Yet he made no movement, though his eyes were wide open and staring into the eerie gloom.

Almost immediately a 'Crocodile' image near by shuddered to seeming life. The cavernous jaws opened and a thin wailing voice issued forth, speaking the words :

'*Lau sinavai dirava Papange!* *Lau sinavai dirava Papange!*' ('I am the River God of the Papanges.')

'*Bama-huta lagaani!*' responded Challoner, raising his head. ('Greetings. Be at rest.')

There was silence for a full minute, then another of the idols spoke, and again, after a pause, another and another. To each Challoner made grave reply. But finally there trembled into being a gigantic shadowy god with the head of an animal the like of which has never been known, and from its maw came the fiercely accusing bellow :

'*Kal-ner! Kal-ner! Yagool diba oi koikoi. Yagool dirava!*' ('Kal-ner, Kal-ner, Yagool knows thee to be false. Yagool is the mighty one!')

Challoner looked up. 'Yagool is a fool,' said he slowly, speaking in the language of the Papangis. 'With my magic I shall slay him. He speaks with the tongue of a liar.'

A groan came back from the moving jaws of the monstrosity.

*'Alaia lasi Kal-ner !'* ('Kill him not, O Kal-ner.')

And Challoner, smiling to himself, responded : 'As thou sayest, O Wise One. It is well.'

From the circular opening in the roof there now descended a great torch of coca fibre and sandalwood. It burned with a steady glow, emitting much pungent smoke, and hung suspended from above by a rope of vines. The shuffling of bare feet on the thatch proclaimed the means by which the illumination had come. The gods were being propitiated for their labours. The acrid fumes were dear to their nostrils !

Challoner thought that his ordeal was over. But he was wrong. The radiance of the torch threw the screen of skulls into relief, and behold ! they had become animated, nodding and rocking from side to side, while their eyeballs rolled and gleamed—and clicked !

He got up, and for the first time that night his hand sought the revolver at his belt. He sat down again with a laugh almost at once. 'Yagool's private entrance must be beyond that grisly curtain,' he muttered. 'In his haste to get out he has jostled it into this devil dance unintentionally.'

He reconsidered this opinion a little later. The grinning shapes came jerkily to rest, yet still they retained a hideous aspect of leering life. Through the drifting torch smoke the eyes appeared to flash with baleful light. Once more he arose to his feet, and gripped the revolver ; he meant to examine the phenomenon at closer range.

And as he strode purposefully forward he experienced a further shock. From behind the awesome screen a hoarse voice spoke out :

'Are ye there, Challoner, or have they murdered ye ? It's me—MacCrimmon !'

'Good God ! What are you doing here ?'

'I've come to rescue you, my lad. I followed up—at a safe distance, I'll admit—an' I hid in the jungle until I saw where they put ye. I waited, an' waited until it was dark, then I crept oot an' scouted around. I saw a thing like a ghost waftin' along as if it meant business. I sneaked behind, but it vanished in here somewhere before I could get near. I couldn't find a door, so I cut a wee hole in the scenery an' squeezed through—an' here I am !'

He emerged into the light and stood before Challoner, a grim, determined figure.

Challoner held out his hand. 'You're a real *man*,' said he, 'but I'm not going back until I've studied things a bit here. I don't mind gambling my skin for knowledge, MacCrimmon. Besides—I gave my promise—the promise of a white man—'

'Ye're just stark starin' mad!' gritted the Scot. 'This place is worse than a Chamber o' Horrors. I've seen an' heard enough in the last ten minutes— Good Lord! What's that?'

He had for the first time noticed the skulls, and was visibly impressed. 'I'm in Hell!' he muttered. 'Or—or I'm seein' things—heidless phantoms in Hades, wi' eyes that burn like cinders from Auld Nick's furnace. I—I'm no' a nervous man, Challoner, but I'd like to ken what sort o' magic is in this.'

'I was just about to investigate a bit when you came along,' Challoner said. 'I've got my own ideas, but anyhow, we'll soon clear up the mystery. Let us start off with the bottom row.'

He raised a poor painted relic in his palm, and examined the eyes; then he tilted the head forward. Two rounded and apparently heavy substances rolled forth on the mud floor, and glinted dully where they lay. He picked them up in silence, and looked at them curiously. Then he remarked coolly, as if the matter were of little account: 'At least you'll be able to tell Tindale that gold *does* exist in the Papangi ranges.'

'Gosh!' ejaculated MacCrimmon, staring hard. 'You don't mean— Well—I'm—jiggered!'

They counted a hundred and seventeen skulls, and of these, seventy-one contained eyes of metallic gold, water-worn and polished as they had come from the river sands. Others held the shells and miscellaneous seeds that had at first been noticeable. A few only sported common quartz pebbles.

At Challoner's direction MacCrimmon reluctantly restored the sundry specimens he had surreptitiously collected.

'Of course, they're yours,' he muttered in apology, moistening his dry lips with his tongue.

'Why, no,' Challoner said, slowly, seemingly startled by the simple remark, 'they belong to the Papangi tribe which knows nothing of their value. These bits of gold have been picked up just because of their glimmer. The primitive taste delights in things that shine. But—but are you in need of this gold, my friend?'

MacCrimmon looked at the speaker in sorrowful silence.

'Man, don't be funny,' he broke out at length. 'What d'ye

think I've come to this God-forsaken country for—a health cure? Good Lord!

'Then the eyes of the skulls shall be yours, MacCrimmon, but you shall take them in fair trade, so that the black man may never say that his white brother is a robber. You shall give even greater than you receive—to the native comprehension—for these poor heads will shine with a more splendid lustre than before.'

And to the wondering man who listened, he unfolded a plan.

When MacCrimmon after many days reached the blistering little White settlement on the coast, he was hailed as one returned from the dead. Tindale's diminished party, arriving some days earlier, had reported that both Challoner and MacCrimmon were in the hands of the Papangis, and this was considered as equivalent to an obituary notice in the local news-sheet.

The new arrival had little to say beyond that he had tried to rescue Challoner, but that Challoner did not want to be rescued, and that he had given ample proof of his ability to rescue himself if, and when, he so desired. He duly gave out the mysterious man's message, however, that there was assuredly gold in the Papangi ranges. The information was not received with any marked show of interest.

'Gold? Huh! It ain't worth a hoot in Hell up in that country,' said Tindale, sensitive about the failure of his expedition.

'I'm goin' to give it another try,' announced MacCrimmon, blandly, 'an' all by my lonesome, too!'

They thought he was mad, and told him so. Later he seemed to verify this suspicion, for he started to make a collection of soda-water bottles—those which had the little ball stopper in their throats—and it was whispered that he broke the bottles in order to extract the glassy marbles imprisoned therein. It was a childish pastime and lent credence to the rumour that MacCrimmon had gone crazy.

He must have acquired quite a collection of the crystal globules before the local 'pub' gently but firmly placed a veto on his innocent hobby. Whereupon MacCrimmon laughed, and went his way, and the bar loafers shook their heads significantly, and sorrowed for him according to their fashion.

Then one morning he was seen heading towards the mountains, armed to the teeth, and with a well-filled pack on his back. He

had not been able to induce any 'carriers' to accompany him, which was not surprising; but he didn't seem to mind.

'They say that Challoner is as mad as a hatter,' gloomed Tindale, 'an' I reckon he has infected MacCrimmon wi' his disease. Blast this bloody country anyway!'

But in due course MacCrimmon made his return in safety, and this time he carried a sack, made out of a blanket, filled to overflowing with nuggets. There were a hundred and forty-two of them—they were counted on the 'pub' bar!—and each was about as big as a small marble.

Thus was the first gold taken from the now famous New Guinean field.

To-day, the curious visitor to the Dobi House of the Papangis, which now contains within its precincts the Hall of Skulls, is mightily intrigued to know how the hundred and seventeen relics reposing there became possessed of such greenly glittering glass eyes. The old-fashioned soda-water bottle is no longer known in the Island!

ALEXANDER MACDONALD.

MEMORIES OF BIRMINGHAM FORTY AND FIFTY  
YEARS AGO.

THE older one grows the more foolish it seems to be to dogmatise about the past, however interesting. I remember the universal and unquestioned devotion to Tennyson, the frequent lectures on 'In Memoriam' and the constant quotations from it. Not long ago I asked a young Oxford graduate if the poet was read to-day. 'Tennyson !' he said with infinite scorn and then in turn quite fairly asked, 'Do you read — ?' mentioning a modern writer who seems to me to usurp the consecrated name of poet and whose unintelligible, unmusical, unscannable effusions I sometimes see in print. Then I wondered was Tennyson to the older people of 1829 such a great poet, or did he seem likely to become one when he won the Cambridge Prize with a poem on 'Timbuctoo.' The gracious soothing melodies of Mendelssohn and Gounod have, temporarily at any rate, gone too, they no longer satisfy the unanchorable movements of this restless age; the smooth brush of Leighton, loved by thousands and thousands some thirty or forty years ago, is to-day characterised as chocolate box-ey; reproductions of *Wedded* no more are to be seen in every shop window, and even the novels of George Eliot are relegated to the highest shelf. In looking back it would seem as though the great people of an age are boundlessly great to their contemporaries, but soon opinion changes. The present all too soon becomes the past when greatness shrinks and shrinks even to extinction.

Has the modern world no false gods too ? Will the Jazz band always be heard in the land ? and the sex novel always be the best-seller ? The generation next but one is the best judge. I go back to the seventies and eighties of last century ; that is far enough off to be in the twilight of time, and only in twilight do the stars begin to shine, even though some soon set.

I recall names of great people (as they seemed to us then) whom I saw or met in my youth ; Gladstone, Joseph Chamberlain, Randolph Churchill, Westcott, Benson, Newman, Shorthouse, and others too. What of them to-day ? It is not without interest perhaps to put on record how they seemed in their day, for they influenced their age and were heroes in their generation.

Nearly all my earliest recollections of Birmingham are centred round King Edward's School, where from a preparatory school in Cheltenham I was sent as a very young boy on the advice of a famous Dean of St. Paul's. It was and is a very great school, a fine Gothic if now begrimed building—designed by Barry, later on the architect of the Houses of Parliament—in the heart of the midland capital. The Rev. A. R. Vardy was Head Master; he had lately come from the City of London School, where Asquith had been one of his Sixth-Form pupils, and Asquith in later life writes thus of his old master, 'Vardy was a scholar and gentleman if ever there was one'—a tribute to which Birmingham boys would subscribe. And could there be any finer? If it is true that it is not what a man does that exalts him, but what a man would do, can there be any higher praise of his character than to say 'he is a scholar and a gentleman.' Good manners, good feelings, high thoughts, with a calm dignity of bearing, are all there; and these make a life rich and beautiful. We were proud of our Head Master, of his presence and his scholarship. The school over which he presided already had a wonderful classical record. Five of its old boys had been senior classics in six consecutive years. I doubt if such a record has any rival. It attained fame too as the school from which came Lightfoot, Westcott and Benson, three of the greatest Bishops of the Victorian Age, if not three of the greatest divines of all ages; they did much to roll back the wave of German agnosticism of the latter part of last century. Vardy did not prove unworthy of the inheritance of honour with which he had entered, but the long roll of academic and other distinctions is another tale. Perhaps some day there will arise a Tom Hughes who will write a great epic about a day school; then the English world will realise the noble part these schools are playing in maintaining and extending the intellectual life of the nation.

In my time King Edward's was entirely a day school, though in the past under Dr. Jeune—father of the distinguished Judge—it had not been so. I lived in lodgings some two and a half or three miles away and walked on most days between ten and twelve miles—a long walk at midday which left little time for the midday meal. Modern medical science would probably say it was all wrong, but was it? Many a boy did it, as in my own case, to his gain. There was a further walk of at least three or more miles to the playing fields. How different from these sybaritic days of charabancs and motor-buses. To-day's boys cannot get more enjoyment out of

their games than we did ; perhaps we got more because we took more trouble to get it.

A visit of Westcott to his old school was a memorable occasion. In the fine 'great school' there is a tablet—and in those days cheapness was not a main consideration, the tablets are worthy of their records—wholly given up to the academic achievements of this devoted 'old boy,' he was one of the five senior classics. The memory of his tribute to his famous Head Master, Prince Lee, remains as one of the most impressive personal appreciations I have ever heard or read. Westcott (to see him was an education in itself, no wonder he was loved and revered by the Durham miners), with his beautiful face and bright piercing blue eyes looking back into the past, revealed to his young audience what could be the abiding influence of a great schoolmaster's life, nor can I help feeling that education with its idealisms as he saw them then made an appeal to the higher possibilities of the human spirit more uplifting and more moving than it makes to-day when it is so much bound up with examination and commercial success. 'My last lesson,' he said, 'was the fullest revelation of my master. . . . Fear not, only believe : these four words were, I think, a perfect interpretation of life as he saw it, and as he taught his pupils to see it : work to be done, work to be done in face of formidable difficulties, work to be done in faith on God.'

During my boyhood there were many changes in the school ; there was no stemming the inflowing tide of democratic ideals in Joseph Chamberlain's town. The school nominally became less of a Church School ; the Bishop of Worcester—there was then no Bishop of Birmingham—ceased to be the official visitor and the holiday on Ascension Day was given up. In its stead Vardy humorously asked for a holiday on Jesse Collings' birthday, the M.P. of three acres and a cow fame.

But perhaps at the time the most far-reaching change was that due to its greatly increased revenue owing to the falling in, and consequent re-valuation, of long leases. The story is romantic. The school was founded in 1552 out of funds derived from the suppression of the Guild of the Holy Cross, and here is the account : 'We are told by ancient chroniclers that when the inhabitants of Birmingham petitioned the Crown for a school their neighbours at King's Norton did the same. In both cases the petitioners were offered land or money to the value of £20 per annum. The King's Norton men accepted the offer in money, but those of Birmingham

took it in land.' The income of the former is to-day as the grain of mustard seed, while that of the latter from its property is more than £50,000 a year! Is a bird in the hand always to be preferred to those two unknowns which may be in the bush?

Soon after my advent in Birmingham I was taken one evening to a meeting in the Town Hall at which a tall, slender young man with an eye-glass was the main speaker. I did not know who he was, but afterwards learnt he was the Mayor, Joseph Chamberlain, only to be referred to in whispers and with caution for he was said to be a Republican! I remember at the time thinking he was not as other speakers, he compelled attention willy-nilly, and I thought I should not like to know him, there was too much sharpness in his face. But all this was forgotten later on.

In looking back upon those years I cannot help feeling that Birmingham was then (perhaps is now, I do not know) a wonderful place. Chamberlain's devotion to it and its devotion to and pride in him was something unique in contemporary history and very winsome. He had visions which he was instrumental in materialising, and if it is true that a people without vision perisheth, it is equally true that seers give life. The Town Hall, Greek in style, was built under his inspiration; in his mayoralty too was laid the foundation-stone of the beautiful Art Gallery wherein is a fine collection of the work of Burne-Jones—himself a King Edward's School boy. Also there were initiated many undertakings for the architectural, financial and moral improvement of the town.

Nor was the stimulus of his genius unfelt in other directions. In political life, in industry, in art, in education there was an intense activity. John Bright, the greatest orator of the age, was one of its representatives in Parliament; its Musical Festival was world-renowned for enterprise and achievement; an American deputation which came to Europe to report upon Municipal Government proclaimed it to be the 'best governed city in the world.' In its pride in itself and its great local patriotism under the inspiration of Joseph Chamberlain, Birmingham was not unworthy of comparison with Athens in the days of Pericles. His power over the people was unbounded, and their devotion to him—to their Joe—had to be seen to be understood. Years later than those of which I am immediately writing, I was present at a crowded meeting in the Town Hall on a summer Saturday afternoon when he was speaking against a Home Rule Bill—here are his final words to his eager audience of working-men: 'If you shrink from the duty which is

cast upon you, if you will desert those who trust to your loyalty and honour, if British courage and pluck is dead within your hearts, if you are going to quail before the dagger of the assassin——' then a quivering motion passed through the vast crowd, as one man it rose to its feet and cheered and cheered again. Chamberlain never finished his peroration aloud. Against such enthusiasm there was no stay.

Let me here recall the last time I saw this great man. I was on a chance visit to the city during an election, and happened to notice that Chamberlain was going to speak at some comparatively small Board School in his constituency, and to this I went. As I was waiting to be admitted a stranger, a Canadian, spoke to me. He said he had 'travelled far to hear Mr. Chamberlain, that outside England he was our best known and regarded as our greatest statesman.' [He had been Colonial Secretary and was then advocating Tariff Reform.] The meeting was a sad disappointment. The fire of the great orator was no longer there, his voice had lost its charm, he was spent, worn out, ill: his words no longer compelled attention: when he was interrupted he could not answer; in the past any interrupter had been made to feel he had far better have kept silence, now rather he felt ashamed as though he had hit a sick and wounded man. There came during the course of the speech one most painful moment, never to be quite forgotten. The speaker stopped suddenly as though his mind had ceased to work, and there came over his face a look of deep distress, as if he were in pain, groping for something he could not find. He stood thus for what seemed an age, but was probably only a few moments, with his eyes turned past the chairman to his wife (whom he had brought not many years before as a young and beautiful bride from America), who from the moment he had risen had never ceased to look at him. She audibly suggested some word, gave him his cue, and he spoke again; but all his persuasive power had gone. He was still loved, still voted for, still could carry all his candidates into Parliament with him; 'we are seven' he could telegraph to the anxious watchers; but he had exhausted his splendid gifts in what he believed to be his country's cause. *Requiescat in pace*; Birmingham was a lesser place without him. The spell is broken which bound a great city to a great personality. The present generation does not know or does not remember how much of the prestige and attractiveness of their city they owe to their former mayor of whom I have written.

But to return to other memories. I remember Lord Randolph

Churchill coming to try and unseat John Bright. Had the attempt more in it of exuberant courage or of breezy impudence, and is Lord Randolph ever remembered now except as being the father of Winston ? His arrival in the town was greatly advertised ; the fiery little man with the bristling moustache and monstrous collar bounced down into our midst with all that superabundant energy which had made the gentle Sir Stafford Northcote say that he (Churchill) had a bee in his bonnet, and which was later on to puzzle even the imperturbable Lord Salisbury and eventually prove his own undoing by swelling him so large that he forgot Gcschen. The old dignified John Bright must have sadly disappointed his assailant : he never once alluded to him, he had neither eyes to see him nor ears to hear him : he went on his way as if completely ignorant of any opposition, and was returned by a vast majority. The noisy crowd which greeted Lord Randolph, and acted as his body-guard, probably in those days had no votes.

Gladstone came to speak in a vast building, Bingley Hall, built I believe for cattle shows ; and as I recall him something of the halo around his latter days comes back to me. His was a name to conjure with ; is there his like to-day ? one who to the honours of the world adds the charm of culture, of religion, and of scholarship ; one who makes no less an appeal to many of the élite of Oxford than to the mass of men. But alack, the only memory I retain of his meeting except that of his deep emotional voice and burning eyes, is one of triviality. In his eloquent gesticulations he knocked over his tall hat, placed on the table in front of him, and countless sheets of notepaper fluttered from it on to the reporters below. The loss made no difference to the orator ; the reporters picked up the sheets, perhaps tried to arrange them, and passed them to the platform above : but I do not think they were once referred to. The reception of Mr. Gladstone in the town was as that of royalty. The streets were bespangled and the crowds enormous. I viewed the scene from a high window of the Midland Institute, and remember the astonished discomfiture of a youth who had climbed up a lamp-post when a bag of flour aimed at him hit its mark and burst, followed by an egg which hit him too before he had time to make his hurried descent. On viewing himself he must have wondered whether political enthusiasm was worth its cost.

It was not an easy thing for an opponent to come and speak in the Chamberlain preserve. Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister, faced the ordeal with success. The impression he left is difficult to

define. I suppose that to the Greeks of old the great Zeus was majestic, aloft, remote. Had the god been met with in the flesh he would have been gravely bowed to with uncovered head, never shaken hands with ; familiarity with him would have been unthinkable. The usual political gods who invaded the Birmingham Town Hall were as the lesser deities, Hermes and Pan and Neptune. Salisbury with his noble head and impressive figure, and weighty words, spoken as if he was conscious of their value and their destiny, was far above them all. Nor was it difficult to believe that in his eyes the House of Commons was of far less importance in the constitution than the House of Lords. There was no disturbance whatever at his meeting, he compelled respect. Very different from the occasion when Lloyd George, an opponent too of Chamberlain, came about 1900.

The vast majority of the citizens, at any rate of politically minded citizens, resented Lloyd George's intrusion. They overcame the stubborn resistance of the police, stormed the Town Hall and made it impossible for speeches to be delivered. It seemed at one time to be very doubtful whether the intended speakers would be able to leave in safety. The anger of a howling mob is as relentless as a raging sea ; Lloyd George left the Town Hall disguised as a policeman, and was hurried away from the city by the first available train. Birmingham has always taken its politics very seriously, and in those days there was only one side possible (except in the very special case of Lord Salisbury). The side was that of Joseph Chamberlain, whether he was a Radical or a Unionist, a Socialist or an Imperialist : in turn he was all. There could be no more striking illustration of the power of personality than that afforded by the history of this city during the latter part of last century and the beginning of this.

But there was in this Midland capital another and very different personality ; he too in his day had played a great part on the world's stage. At the Oratory was Cardinal Newman, an old man, with an infinitely sad and beautiful face : after many buffeting storms he had passed into a haven of rest in his quiet unpretentious home in Edgbaston. One never passed outside it without remembering that inside those red-brick walls lived one who had rent Oxford in twain and of whom Disraeli had said that his loss was the greatest blow the English Church had ever sustained. Owing to friendship with one of the masters at the Oratory I was not infrequently at receptions held in the school, and had an oppor-

tunity of seeing the love and reverence with which the Cardinal was received when he came, as he usually did, to the performance of the Latin Play—in the preparation for which he was said to take a keen interest. He was then neither cardinal nor priest, no question of dogma or belief disturbed one's thoughts, one just felt the respect which human nature must always feel before instinctive goodness. He was nearer to the divine light than can be approached by any but a very few, and something of that light always hovered round him. As long as any church can produce such an one the immemorial life of Christianity, whatever may be the strength to which it is opposed, will never lose its hold and influence upon the heart of mankind. Only once did I hear him preach, and the memory of the scene is imperishable. It was an evening service; in the semi-darkened church all faces were upturned to the small frail figure which stood in the pulpit high above their heads. On the steps behind him stood a priest: but the Cardinal, though over eighty and very thin and wan, almost ethereal, needed no help: nor was his eyesight dimmed; he read without glasses a small Bible in which the type must have been minute. In that quiet, beautiful voice which had stirred England to its very depth forty and more years ago, whose echoes had not yet ceased to reverberate in the bitter religious controversy of the day, he said nothing that could not (except for the way of saying it) have been spoken in any professedly Christian place of worship. Mrs. Humphry Ward writes of him as she knew him in the sixties in her early days at Oxford, 'no one who ever came near to Newman could afterwards lightly speak ill of him,' and she lived among his opponents, Pater, Mark Pattison, Jowett. I can well believe what she says; certainly he would have been a bitter man indeed, devoid of all capacity for love, who could speak against the old, ascetic scholar and priest as I remember him.

A very different man was John Henry Shorthouse, of *John Inglesant* fame. His always struck me as a most strange and incongruous life. Steeped in the literature of the Stuart times, he used to boast that he was no reader of modern writers, and had read nothing whatever later than Byron, yet day by day he could be seen walking, generally smoking a cigar, to his very much of a nineteenth-century business, that of a chemical manufacturer. In a large, dusty, gloomy chamber with, I think, an earthen floor, he could be found sitting at a desk; not far off was a red glowing furnace and many large straw-covered beakers containing acids. In the heart

of the city of Birmingham it seemed a glimpse into a wizard's chamber of the Middle Ages, and perhaps in such Shorthouse would have been more at home. I am sure his business was not his life ; in the street he scarcely noticed passers-by, his thoughts were probably far away, for he used to jot down notes for his books as they occurred to him on any odd pieces of paper, backs of envelopes, etc., which he happened to have in his pocket.

*John Inglesant*, I am told, after repeated rejections by publishers whose readers looked coldly upon it, was printed for private circulation.<sup>1</sup> A copy was sent to Mr. Gladstone, as one interested in such subjects. The book appealed to him ; he wrote an enthusiastic article on it—and from his praise the boom began. The Macmillan firm, one of those who had formerly declined it, promptly took it up. For years it had a tremendous vogue, and brought the author into close contact with many dignitaries of the church ; it was almost impossible to go to his house without meeting at least a Dean. In spite of his fame he never lost the simplicity associated with his Quaker origin.

At a dinner in his house I heard the artist (Alma Tadema, I think) tell the following story, which as far as I know has never been in print. When a young unknown man, Tadema painted a picture 'Moses,' that was hung in the Academy, where a Jew saw it and liked it. He asked the artist to paint a portrait of his father. Tadema consented and made an appointment to meet the Jew ; what followed I tell in the same words as I heard them, as nearly as I can.

THE JEW. I have bought de frame and want a portrait of my fader to fit it.

TADEMA. The picture shall fit the frame. May I see your father ?

THE JEW. My fader has been dead many years.

TADEMA. How can I paint the portrait without seeing him ?

THE JEW. Wot ! You paint a portrait of Moses who has been dead hundreds of years, and cannot paint my fader who has only been dead a few years !

TADEMA (*to whom guineas at this time were scarce, then began to enter into the spirit of the undertaking*). Well, tell me something about your father. Have you a photograph of him ?

THE JEW. No. I have no photograph, but he was just like me. He had a big white shirt-front just like me (and here the

<sup>1</sup> By an undesigned coincidence, the story of *John Inglesant* and its publication is told more fully on p. 378 of this number, in connexion with the late James Payn.

narrator drew his hand across his front), he had a big gold chain just like me, and he had a big nose.

*(With these scanty details and the frame Tadema left, and did his best.*

*When he had finished he sent for the Jew, and this was the latter's comment as he looked at the picture.)*

So, dat's my fader : yes, the pictur fits de frame : he has a big white shirt-front just like me, he has a big gold chain just like me, and he has a big nose, but mein Gott ! how my fader has changed.

Shorthouse always struck me as a very remarkable man. A. C. Benson, who apparently met him once, seems inclined to think he had a reputation beyond his deserts ; perhaps, as I began by saying, he is not as great as his contemporaries thought, though to meet him only once might easily give a false impression, for he had a most unfortunate stammer which grew worse if one tried to find words for him ; this made it both difficult and painful for strangers to talk to him. He had such an insight into the power of music, its language, its meaning, as is not often met with : he once said to me that the great religious novel had yet to be written, and it would be written in music. I did not understand what he meant, but suppose it was something like what Schubert meant, when in reply to a question as to the meaning of one of his compositions said, 'If I could have expressed its meaning in words I should not have written it in music.' Shorthouse had the same feeling, but it was all the more remarkable because he was physically, at any rate, devoid of all tune sense. He could not recognise even the national anthem. He stood up when it was being played because others stood up too, but he could not hum it, nor recognise it from other tunes. It is very clear that he had a sense of the music of language. The descriptions of the trial and execution of Charles, and of Inglesant's dedication of his sword in the mountain chapel, will always take their place among the most beautiful descriptive writings in our great literature.

He dedicated his first book to Rawdon Levett in these graceful words :

MY DEAR LEVETT,—

I dedicate the volume to you that I may have an opportunity of calling myself your friend. John Inglesant has become a classic and as such is read in many a Sixth Form for its style, but Levett's work is the more abiding and is

As the sweet presence of a good diffused,  
And in diffusion ever more intense.

It is difficult to measure the ever-widening influence of a great schoolmaster, it is one of the profoundest and most far-reaching influences in our national life. Levett was senior mathematical master at King Edward's School, but he was much more than a successful teacher of mathematics.

The supposed reformers cry out to-day for more Science, more Foreign languages, more Commercial subjects. If desirable let these come in full abundance, but they in themselves will not add one iota to the education of the people. Only while such men as Rawdon Levett give up their lives to the creative work of teaching will education be of primary value to the national life: the personality of the teacher is the only educating factor. The last two senior wranglers were Birmingham old pupils, and this success was indicative of much that had gone before, but if Levett is remembered now—long after his death—he would wish to be remembered not for examination success, for which in itself he had no opinion, but rather because he helped all who came in contact with him to do their best, whatever their vocation, and whether with ten talents or with only one, by the influence of his mind and the gift of his friendship. He was among the memorable citizens of Birmingham in the days of which I write, and probably indirectly has had a greater effect upon the life of the city than some of those who achieved wider fame. He saw in a great school placed in the centre of a great city a unique opportunity not merely for the imparting of information, which is the least part of education, but for the uplifting of the whole of the corporate life, that from it could come the realisation that true education is a spiritual activity without which rich men are really poor, and that this activity must find its expression in the translation of energy from one noble purpose to another, and that in faithful labour done to the best of one's powers, lies the chief joy and chief stimulus in life.

C. H. P. MAYO.

THE WINGS OF WAR.

I.

BAPTISM OF FIRE.

It was May, 1918, and after eighteen months of varied experiences in the Naval Air Service, I arrived with three newly-trained observers to take up a fresh form of work in France.

No. 300 Squadron, our squadron, was stationed at Bergues aerodrome, a few miles south of Dunkirk. An old Naval formation, it was the only flying unit to remain in France continuously from the early days of 1914. Beginning with seaplanes based in Dunkirk Harbour, it had shifted to land machines and had been bombed out of its first aerodrome before moving to Bergues.

Throughout, its job was to keep a constant watch on the coast and the three Belgian ports in enemy hands, to work in conjunction with the ships of the 'Belgian Coast Patrol' and in general to act as the 'eyes of the fleet.' The three 'flights' of which it was composed divided the work of 'visual reconnaissance,' photography and 'spotting' for the gunfire of the monitors during bombardments of the coast. The observers' work was highly technical. None of us, so we four new arrivals learnt, would be of any real use until we had been flying for at least three months. At first therefore we were to act merely as gunlayers in the escorting machines of 'B' Flight, which patrolled the coast twice daily from Dunkirk to the Dutch frontier.

When the C.O. had finished his talk, he handed me over to one Penn, who volunteered to show me round the aerodrome. I saw that in machines—D.H.4's with 'Eagle 8' Rolls-Royce engines—we could hold our own with any unit. There was need of them, it seemed. Penn pointed out that the German anti-aircraft fire was so 'dashed good: they've been there since '14 you know,' that one either had to fly very low or very high. Low flying meant machine-gun fire, and that, as Penn said, was 'pretty beastly.'

The aerodrome itself seemed fairly good in surface and area. Our hangars and huts stood at one end, matched by a similar collection at each of the farther corners of a triangle. One was

occupied temporarily by a 'fighter' squadron, the other housed No. 333, also an ex-naval unit, using D.H.4's for daylight bombing along the coastal sector.

Round the 'drome low-lying land stretched on every side for mile after mile, cut by ditches and waterways and rendered still more dreary by the inevitable poplars. The horizon was broken only by the red roofs of Bergues, the smoke of Dunkirk and the distant knoll of Mont Kemmel. Nearer at hand stood one or two forbidding cottages. With these or their occupants we had few dealings. (Stay, was there not one old woman who came to wash my shirts and who, out of the goodness of her heart, used to darn my khaki with green or scarlet wool?)

Of war there was no immediate sight or sound. But Penn led me away to his private dug-out and showed me where to steal the corrugated iron when I should come to build my own. I saw the necessity that evening when 'Mournful Mary' wailed from Dunkirk to herald the nightly bomb-raid. By special invitation we new observers jammed ourselves into an already crowded dug-out where we lay stifling for several hours. This was obviously an abuse of hospitality, and by the next afternoon, Sutton, Telford and I were labouring with spades. Compared to the massive shelters at Felixstowe, our pit was not a great achievement, but we hoped that the couple of inches of earth over the corrugated iron roof might perhaps turn shrapnel. We used it that same night.

The C.O.'s intention had been to give us a few days' grace to learn something of the coast before sending us beyond the lines. So, for a time, we studied maps and photographs; trying to memorise the lie of the coast, the position of enemy batteries and aerodromes and—most important of all—the disposition of the flotillas of torpedo craft. No. 300 Squadron had been responsible for the preliminary reconnaissance and photographic work for the Zeebrugge Raid, a few weeks previously, and from the prints in the great mahogany-covered book we began to understand something of the importance of our job. The photographs—taken from a height of nearly four miles—were amazingly clear. In time they helped us to know certain areas, such as Zeebrugge, rather more intimately than the lines on our own palms. Zeebrugge, as the advanced base for destroyers and submarines, formed our chief quarry. Ostend, after many bombardments, now seldom held more than torpedo-boats; and the little port of Blankenberge was noteworthy only as the headquarters of the E.M.B.s—the

electrically controlled motor-boats. (One of these queer craft, crewless and steered from a distance through a cable trailing from the stern, later blew a hole in the side of a monitor off Dunkirk piers.) But, along the thirty miles of coast 225 naval guns of heavy calibre were mounted in permanent emplacements, and these it was part of our business to know. The anti-aircraft batteries were also marked on the maps but were less important—in the squadron office.

Sutton and Bell were the first of us to sample high flying. No. 333 Squadron—the bombers—through casualties, were short of observers, and their C.O. sent over to borrow a couple for the afternoon.

The pair came back with one impression uppermost—the intense cold. Bell was too busy with nursing his fingers to curse, but Sutton's language was astonishing for Sutton. His helmet had slipped. One ear was swelling rapidly into a blister the size of a walnut, and his rosy cheeks had turned purple. That one flight seemed to have considerably sobered his keenness.

My own turn came shortly afterwards. Masters and I were to form one of the two escorts to the 'plane carrying out the dawn reconnaissance. Dull weather, however, put the patrol out of the question until after ten o'clock.

Warned by Sutton, I dressed with care. Thick underwear, a leather jacket, and a sweater went under my tunic, with a muffler over all. I smeared my face with bear's grease or whale oil or some such disgusting concoction, and then struggled into the flying-kit proper. First came the helmet, reaching down to the shoulders, and then over three pairs of socks went the fleece-lined thigh-boots. Finally, one tugged on the combination suit with its triple layers of fur, silk and waterproof cloth. There remained the three pairs of gloves—the silk, the woollen and the leather gauntlets with their fleece-lined flap—and the goggles in the fur and leather mask. When that was in place on the helmet, every part was hidden and well armoured except the nostrils. All that could be done for them was a generous coating of the grease. Therefore for three hours one communed intimately with a flavour of bear—or was it whale? (By way of precaution, I usually filled my pockets with a watch, compass and map, tobacco, chocolate, a little money and shaving tackle and a toothbrush. A sixty-mile stretch beyond the lines seemed to offer plenty of scope for forced landings.)

Thus arrayed, I walked, or rather waddled, to the aerodrome. Although June had yet to come, each step opened fresh pores of perspiration, and my clothes were literally soaking when I reached the hangars. The propellers of three machines were already turning. The six of us—three pilots and three observers—met for a brief consultation and a final blessing from the C.O. Masters and I had a few mutual signals to arrange—very few they seemed to me. We separated and were heaved by the aid of mechanics into our respective cockpits. I put on goggles and gloves, tested the movements of the Lewis gun on its circular Scarff mounting and fiddled with the pans of ammunition. Masters turned his head: I nodded, and we were off to taxi into position. The full roar from the three engines answered the C.O.'s signal shot. All three took off together, circled the aerodrome once, and slanted upwards on the wide spiral to gain height.

To my left, as I stood facing the tail, rode our fellow escort, level with and in line with our machine. I could see the black hump of her pilot's head and the hunched figure of her observer. Like myself, he stood exposed from the waist upwards with a 120 miles-an-hour wind tearing at back, shoulders and arms. Midway between us and beneath my lower wing, the third observer sat at his ease in the leader. His job it was to do the real observing; ours to keep watch for enemy aircraft.

I had never been above 10,000 feet before. For the first time I saw that strange illusion by which the ground appears to shrink in size in definite stages. As we mounted, my soaked clothing grew clammier and chillier on my body; but what of that? Where were my forebodings? This was Life. The intoxication of the upper air had gripped me. There was only one possible outlet: I bellowed and sang. *Revue ditties, Gilbert and Sullivan; hymns, Navy and Army ballads, or impromptu sagas*—anything with a vestige of a lilt would serve. Each and all they reverberated finely inside my helmet. I essayed to beat time with my arms until the slip-stream caught me and flung me face downwards upon the fuselage. The shock quietened me, but not for long. Rhythms danced too insistently in my brain.

At 17,000 feet we ran into clouds. There were no breaks, so, finding it impossible to climb through them, our leader turned and headed eastward. We crossed into enemy territory above Nieuport; the skeleton of Nieuport, with its maze of whitey-grey water-logged shell-holes to show where a British division had met

disaster in '17—centuries before. To our right stretched the wide lake of the area that, flooded by the Belgians to stay the German advance, had held the coastal situation nearly static for four years. Beneath us, there was little to mark the position of the Belgian trenches, cut curving south-eastward; tiny sparkles showed plenty of activity along the distant British line. Somewhere behind those sparkles lay Ypres.

While I was leaning over looking southward, something much closer caught my eye. A white puff of smoke had suddenly appeared beneath us. It hung and gently expanded. Another floated ahead of our leader but on our level. We passed through it as it thinned. Then, with a flash and a dull 'whump!' above the roar of our engine, a third flung our tail upward.

Within a few seconds the formation was literally surrounded by bursting shrapnel. Every now and again some louder cough seemed to be the end of all things. It was useless to tell myself that A.A. fire rarely brought down a machine: each flash seared and shrivelled me. Though never before had I felt a 'plane to be fragile in the air, now the paltry cloth and wire seemed ready to dissolve at a touch.

At last our leader banked to his left and led us out to sea. He was right: when Ostend was our first objective, there was no point in trailing directly over the coastal guns at 16,000 feet. A little way out, he turned again to follow the coastline from seaward. A few bursts still kept pace with us. They fell short. Trouble was over for the moment. I even started to sing once more.

Beneath us now lay the empty sea, greyish from that height save where it broke in a lighter thread against the beach. Beyond stretched the dull grey land dotted with pin-points of flame from the A.A. guns. Far away to our left I could barely distinguish under a layer of cloud the outline of what must be the southern English coast. We passed the triple white streaks of the roads at Raversyde, and turned sharply in towards the mushroom of parti-coloured smoke that awaited us above Ostend.

Ostend itself and the little crooked finger of Zeebrugge Mole came into sight together as the wing swung up. That was the crowning moment of my first patrol. Something indefinable filled me—a thrill of elation—a sense of changed values, of added unreality, of romance even. Through the months to follow, familiarity would obscure it; fear, ever and again, would vanquish it

for a time, but it never was wholly lost. From that moment we became gods. Let Ostend belch forth her smoke ; let her spite jar and buffet us—no effort of hers could stay us from voyaging over her secret parts. She might force us to twist and turn and dive : might force me to cling and tremble and cover my ears. But we were mightier than men. We were mightier far than the poor earthworms who lit those puny sparks four miles beneath.

The first few seconds of that barrage had broken our formation. One by one our three machines dived out from between the smoke-wreaths. We reformed quickly before continuing to skirt the coast eastwards : Ostend had a reputation as an ambush for enemy scouts. All that I had found time to recognise were the black hulk of the *Vindictive*, lying at an angle with the gapped pier, and the Bassin de Chasse with its seaplane station.

The scattered shell-bursts—never quite at an end—grew more troublesome as we neared little Blankenberghe. We swept inland in an arc over the bottle-shaped harbour. Close ahead, we saw that Zeebrugge had prepared a welcome. It was ready and waiting ; a barrage of shrapnel and high explosive 1,000 feet tall and seemingly impenetrable. We dived in on full throttle, were separated from our leader early and circled twice above the accursed place. This was Ostend over again, but worse—far worse. When Masters and I drew clear in the wake of our leader, the fabric was floating in strips from our wings and one landing wire trailed from the strut. I seldom found 'Archie' so heavy and accurate as during my baptism of fire.

But, more vivid than our dodgings, is the memory of my first sight of the blockships and the throb they gave me. There they lay, *Thetis* at the canal mouth, with *Iphigenia* and *Intrepid* far up the channel. No photograph, no report had brought home to me so clearly what kind of work had been done that St. George's Day. From that altitude, when the whole range of defences stood revealed, the feat appeared utterly incredible.

Off Knocke, our formation turned for home. We kept some distance out from the coast throughout the return trip. Our work was done. Now surely was the time for song. My efforts died away. Gradually the cold was piercing through my armour. Hands and feet grew numb despite all my attempts to keep them moving. As I stood pivoting my head in an endless circle, searching the sky above, to either side and below for the black specks of German scouts, a new horror seized me. Would my fingers serve

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to handle the gun ? I slipped the flap off my right hand and pulled the trigger. That was satisfactory enough, although there was a reproach in the startled jerk of Masters' head.

The last of my exhilaration had sunk into apathy before Ostend was well abeam. Nothing occurred to rouse me. Finally, over Nieuport, our leader tilted downwards. Masters shut off the engine, and we began the long, long slant for the ground. The air grew warmer as we sank. Then began the agony of returning circulation. Regulations would not move my fingers : someone else would have to unload the gun. When we landed, a Good Samaritan unbuttoned and stripped off my flying-kit, but even his quickness came too late to save me from a fresh flood of perspiration.

The C.O., awaiting us on the aerodrome, was surprised to hear that we had met no enemy machines. Although fighting was apparently rather the exception than the rule with our squadron, he had thought the weather conditions ideal for a surprise attack from the clouds. Also, there had been rumours of the arrival of a 'circus' in the coastal sector.

Before long, the rumours took more definite shape. Our patrols were increasingly dived upon by German scouts of an unfamiliar type. No. 333 Squadron lost one or more D.H.4's in the same way and our own scouts met the new-comers almost daily. We learnt their markings and the colours of the nose-band on their leader. Whether or not they formed an authentic 'No. 2 Circus' (an organisation of picked pilots modelled on Richthofen's old unit and intended to counter Allied air supremacy in any particular area) there was no disagreement about their fighting qualities.

For a week I personally saw no signs of them. In fact, my next two patrols were almost peaceful. On both occasions, a misty atmosphere screened us from overmuch A.A. and—what was more to the point—we were able to fly at 18,000 feet or still higher. Once or twice on the following trips I watched distant clusters in the sky, but these remained too far off to be recognised.

Each new flight at that period usually brought me a change of pilot. That system had disadvantages from the observer's point of view. One had misgivings about flying with an unknown man at the controls. Apart from his actual skill (to me, particularly, a vital factor), so much depended on his intuition and sometimes on his prompt obedience. Between pilot and observer in the D.H.4 stretched a long curve of fuselage : too long for an arm to reach

over or for a shout to carry. Yet some means of quick communication was of course essential. (Wireless telephony was still only an experiment.) A scribbled note might be passed across if there was time—in moments of crisis there was no time. Although the pilot could be guided with cord 'reins' tied to his shoulders, these were not enough. A code of raps on the fuselage or jerks on the controls was useful: some enthusiasts evolved systems of dials and pointers on the lines of a ship's telegraph; but all such were makeshifts at best. Nothing could compare with the form of telepathy that developed between a few of us in the air. It varied of course with individuals. With some pilots I knew an understanding so swift and complete that a nod or an outflung hand conveyed as much as a spoken sentence. Whether due to a sharpening of the senses under tension or to the quickening effort of great heights, it was accepted without comment. Then it seemed commonplace. But shall I, I wonder, meet again in any man or woman so responsive a mind as once I found in Masters or Penn or Morrall or Doyle, or even White?

One man's name stands high in that list, and with reason, although we made comparatively few flights together. Shortly after my batch of observers had joined the squadron, Morrall had come to No. 300 with two other Americans—officers of the U.S. Marine Corps—'for instruction.' We suspected them at first and kept a little apart, but finding no signs of that 'We've come to show you how to win the War' attitude, the Mess adopted them in full. Morrall explained later on. All three had been specially urged to walk warily by a U.S. Major who had spent some years in the British service. Certainly, they obeyed to the letter.

The youngest, Pyne, who was a good deal older than our average age, was chiefly remarkable for the good humour with which he suffered our would-be wits. These found delight in his leather breeches and the array of medal ribbons won by prowess in training camps or at the rifle butts.

Sharett, for all his courtly manners, seemed to regard us as children of strange habits. It was he who in the later summer made a great fight against odds. Wounded in three places, his observer dead, half his control wires shot away, his 'plane in rags and splinters, he returned to make a good landing on the right side of the lines.

It was with Morrall that I met the circus. We had been sur-

prised to find our names bracketed together in the squadron 'daily orders.' Although a new pilot normally flew with an experienced observer, and vice versa, Morrall took me on his first patrol.

Our leader left his reconnaissance of Ostend until our return from Zeebrugge. All along the coast the A.A. fire had been warm, and Ostend already had a barrage aloft before we dived in from seaward. But, once we were fairly within it, it suddenly weakened and ceased. Over the heart of Ostend this was eerie. Worse, it was ominous. Then from inland, from beyond the last fading vapour, came one, two, seven dark shapes. They were on us before our formation—spread by the shell-bursts—could close up. Five Pfaltz scouts passed beneath us. I saw, with a queer shock, the black crosses upon their upper planes. Through the roar of our engine sounded the thin rattle of machine-guns.

Our leader pitched forward on to his wing-tip and went down sickeningly in a tail-spin. The other escort—the scouts were between—sheered out to sea. We were alone. Morrall and I—one entity—were utterly alone.

A scout drew clear of our wing. I tore at the gun mounting, wrenched round the Lewis, and pulled trigger. Aghast, I watched the streaks of my tracer bullets. They drove a full length astern. My body throbbed in sheer terror, but the aim was right. With that chatter of guns whipping me to a frenzy, I tried again. The tracers still went wide. It was useless: we were done! Then I saw the cause. I was firing point-blank. (Wind foresight, ringsight—*deflection, fool, deflection!*) My gun slewed a little. The tracers darted into the fuselage. A red surge, a flaming surge filled me. It swelled to a frantic joy as the Pfaltz tilted and dropped. . . .

A scout hung close on either side of our tail. Three others reared upwards and spat smoke tracers from below. I was crazed. I shouted mad obscenities as I swung mounting and gun back and forth. "Half a drum for you, you swine. . . . God! I've got you." Round goes the gun. "Your turn, you — . . . Oh Christ, the gun's jammed! . . . No it hasn't—another pan quick, fool, quick. . . . Take that, you — — German — . . . That's right, get to hell out of it." Round swings the Lewis again. I find time to loose a hundred rounds at that incessant yammering from underneath. . . .

A scout tries to pass us close and broadside on. I fire three short bursts. It dives with a flicker of flame from the nose. I cannot watch it go. But, in amazement, I catch a glimpse of a

man's head in the cockpit. A man! I am fighting machines, not men. . . .

We were clear. There was not another machine to be seen in the sky, and Nieuport lay below. At what time we had shaken them off, or with what damage, Morrall and I did not know—any more than we remembered the full sequence of the fight. It was enough to know that we could see Dunkirk ahead.

Our own damage was astonishingly slight. A number of holes in the fabric, chipped woodwork, slit padding round my cockpit and a groove in my gauntlet: that was all we ever discovered.

My heart warmed to Morrall. Realising that, surrounded as we had been, zigzagging would merely have hampered me, he had kept a steady course at full throttle. Instead of yielding to the temptation to bring his fixed Vickers into play, he had left the fighting to my gun and had nursed our all-important height. With his limited field of view still further blocked by my body, he must have had by far the harder part.

We were very pleased with ourselves, my pilot and I; very pleased with ourselves. I, being merely the observer, could only fire Véry lights and sing (vilely out of tune as ever). He, as the pilot, gave vent to his feelings by looping the loop. For some agonised moments my singing stopped: I thought some stray bullet had just shown its effect.

We landed, but although our fellow escort was standing on the 'drome, none came to meet us save our squadron commander. There was no welcome in his face. After he had spoken the first few blistering words, I basely deserted Morrall and crept away.

When I had written my report I found Morrall in the Mess brooding over a couple of glasses. He thrust one at me, too broken to speak. The worst of it was that we knew the C.O. to be perfectly right. The squadron D.H.4's were not built to be looped and nothing could excuse the risk Morrall had taken with a war machine. Our 'bus would have to go out of action to have every part tested for signs of strain.

The other escort pilot came in to apologise for the engine trouble that had caused him to leave the formation. He had been in France too long. I went as his observer two days later and did not like his preference for the seaward side of the patrol or his indifference to my signals. It was a relief when he was transferred to a home squadron. One could pity a man with 'cold

feet' but one could scarcely blame him: 'wind up' and 'cold feet' were too closely related.

The circus and I met twice more. On the second occasion our three machines were in close formation when eight Pfaltz dived on us from the clouds. We saw them early and made out to sea where they dared not follow us. (Much we owed to those good Rolls-Royce engines.) At our last meeting there was even less of a scrap: it simply became a long-range duel with six of them.

But they were beginning to hamper our work, and worse. It was they who shot down little Telford and his pilot in flames. Telford I had known and liked for months: we could ill spare Telford.

When the news came in the C.O. acted promptly. In person he led half the squadron up and down the coast on an offensive patrol as an open invitation. We had less trouble after that flight. Fighting was not the proper business of No. 300. Our orders were to bring back our reports at all costs, but the C.O. held that our routine flights were only made possible by the prestige our D.H.4's enjoyed among the enemy airmen.

Before long, however, a British scout pilot shot down the leader of the circus. Little more was heard of the remainder. All we had to expect for the future was occasional attacks by small groups.

'Archie' was really our chief problem. Although some of the Mess seemed almost to disregard shell-fire, others confessed to some especial dread. One or two pilots would never fly without an iron disc under the cushion of their seat, knowing this to be as vain a protection as the buttoning of a book over the stomach. My own anxiety was for my eyesight. In theory, at least, the thought of blindness was more hateful than the vision that came to me at times—too clearly—of my shattered body lying in a Belgian field under the wreckage of the machine.

Once the choice appeared to be thrust upon me. Over Blankenberghe, one evening, my pilot had lost touch with the formation in thick cloud. We dived beneath into clearer air, and saw only two monoplanes growing rapidly in size from the eastward. Perhaps mistaking us for a single-seater, they came straight on for our tail. I thought to surprise them by holding my fire until they were close upon us. With the Lewis ready aimed, it was as much as I could do to keep my finger from the trigger. My whole body

thumped and quivered while I watched the smoke tracers spray from the nearer of the two. But no one could miss that target. I yelled triumphantly as at long last I pulled trigger. Then all went dark. I was completely blind. My helmet felt cold and clammy through my hair. I sank back without hope. In the darkness I could hear the 'sst' of bullets while the gun itself sounded ever louder. And yet, there was no pain in my head! I stroked a glove over the helmet. Oil, it was—not blood—oil from a cut pipe. My hand flew to the goggles. Light sprang in through the smeared glass—my eyes were unhurt. I was alert enough now. The oil poured back and covered the glass as fast as it was wiped, but that gun must be silenced. To expose the face at 19,000 feet meant frost-bite: not to fire meant the end—either seemed certain. I jerked down goggles and mask, pointed the Lewis, and fired. The monoplane was dead in line with our rudder, and close up. There was time for only a few bursts—no eyeballs could long endure that searing pain. Up came the mask for a second or two, down again for a few rounds, and up once more. It was shooting of the wildest, but, the tracers must have scared the German from our tail. His gun stopped and, when next I saw him, he was flying away at right angles with his companion still lagging in the rear.

The D.H.4 was patched and ready for service within a few hours of landing at Bergues, but aching eyes, swollen cheeks and a magnificent bulbous nose kept her observer from the air for a week or more.

D. P. CAPPER.

*(To be continued.)*

## JAMES PAYN, 1830-98.

AMONG the various centenaries which fall in this year, there is one especially which it is the pious duty of the CORNHILL to commemorate. On the last day of February, a hundred years ago, was born James Payn, a man whose gifts as novelist and essayist, as lover of letters and discriminating encourager of budding talent, found large scope during the thirteen years that he was editor of the CORNHILL, and indeed, during the nine years before that, while he was Reader to the firm of Smith, Elder.

He had already won an assured position in the world of letters when, in his forty-fifth year, he was invited by George Smith, head of the firm and founder of the CORNHILL, to take up the post of Reader. The offer came at a crucial moment in his career. For nearly seventeen years he had been editor of *Chambers' Journal*, the first year in conjunction with Leitch Ritchie, a prolific journalist now, perhaps, only remembered as the writer of 'The Butterfly's Ball,' and thereafter as sole editor, living at first in Edinburgh, and afterwards editing the magazine from London. He had formed a warm friendship with Robert Chambers; but after Robert's death, it was not such smooth sailing with his successor William Chambers, and Payn resigned in 1874. By a fortunate coincidence, Smith Williams, who had so long been Reader to Smith, Elder, and is still remembered for his sympathetic treatment of the unknown Charlotte Brontë, was now resigning. On the recommendation of Leslie Stephen, his old friend from Cambridge days, and at this time editor of CORNHILL, Payn was appointed in Smith Williams' place.

Few men could have been better qualified for the task. Long years of editorial work had brought him into contact with many writers and made him adept at sifting good MSS. from bad. He already had some thirty-four books to his credit—poems, essays, collections of short stories, descriptive works and no less than twenty-two novels. It is said that *Lost Sir Massingberd*, which appeared in *Chambers' Journal* in 1864, raised the circulation by twenty thousand copies. Indeed, he seems to have been born with the writer's gift; to vary Pope's lines:

'While yet a child, and still unknown to fame,  
He lisped in novels, for the novels came.'

He was fonder of books and stories than of the field sports into which his father initiated him. Sent to a preparatory school at the age of seven, he won fame among his schoolfellows by his power of story-telling. At Eton, where perhaps the standard was higher, he was not so successful ; an article he had written for a school magazine was rejected, and he was hurt. It is curious and interesting, by the way, that with all his linguistic powers he had no liking and no aptitude for the classics ; though with the aid of a 'crammer' he passed third into Woolwich. But he was not destined to become a soldier, even an R.E. The rigid discipline of the place, the coarse amusements of his fellows, were not to his liking ; after a year his health suffered ; and he was withdrawn. After the Army, the Church. His father, the excellent Clerk to the Thames Commissioners, decided that he should take Orders, and sent him to a private tutor's in Devonshire to be prepared for Trinity, Cambridge. At his tutor's he found congenial surroundings in which his literary tastes flourished. Not only did he get verses printed in various periodicals, but he paid off an old score and opened a new one with a description of life at the Woolwich Academy. This was published in *Household Words*. On the one hand it provoked a remonstrance from the Governor of the Academy ; on the other it brought him into touch with Dickens, the editor of *Household Words*, an admired luminary into whose orbit he was to be drawn in person some years later.

Of these Cambridge days and the versatile charm which was natural to Payn, his contemporary Leslie Stephen wrote : 'He had a unique position among his companions. He was no scholar in the Cambridge sense, and used language about Aeschylus calculated to curdle the blood of a Greek professor. He was not a mathematician, though his remarkable talent for whist showed, I suppose, some talent of calculation ; nor could he challenge the respect even then conceded to athletes. He preferred humorously to exaggerate his own muscular defects. He brought back from a reading party in the Lakes a pun which charmed him : "The labour we delight in physics Payn," said his mountaineering friends, and he accepted the phrase as a motto.' (Can Leslie Stephen himself have been the mountaineer with the handy quotation ?)

The years at Cambridge were decisive. He took his degree, but did not take Orders. He did not become a preacher, though he did become President of the Union. His genius for friendship awoke ; he made firm friends not only among his contemporaries,

but with his dons, who encouraged his literary efforts, for he published two volumes of verse while still an undergraduate. His mind was made up ; he turned to literature as a profession.

It was a bold plunge into life. Still more boldly, before he was fully twenty-four, he married—to his great happiness—Louisa Adelaide Edlin, to whom he had been engaged before he took his degree, and made his first home in the Lake district at Rydal Cottage, under the shadow of Nab Scar, at the very heart of the Wordsworth territory. Among his neighbours, over at Grasmere, was Harriet Martineau, to whom he had an introduction from Miss Mitford, an old friend of his father's. They were both literary 'lions,' and both helped him on his way with encouragement and advice during the four years he spent at Rydal, until, as has been said, he went to Edinburgh in 1858 to edit *Chambers' Journal*.

It was in 1874 that James Payn became Reader to Smith, Elder. This was not his first contact with the firm. He had long wished to enter into what he called a 'mutually beneficial' arrangement with these rising and vigorous publishers. In his Edinburgh days, and later again in the sixties, he proposed that they should publish novels of his. In the judgment of the firm, however, a novel which had already been published serially was not, as a rule, likely to succeed in the old three-volume form at 31s. 6d., and the proposals were declined.

To begin with, Payn came to Waterloo Place for a short and agreed term, in order that he might see how the work suited him and that George Smith, for his part, might see how the firm liked his work. The experiment answered and their mutual relations were always most cordial ; Payn continued his work as literary adviser for twenty-four years, and succeeded Leslie Stephen as editor of the CORNHILL in 1883. Those who remember the old houses of Waterloo Place can picture him at work in the familiar second-floor room with his two windows looking out from between the big red columns of the façade upon the western side of the street. The third window on this floor belonged to a smaller room, once no doubt a dressing-room, which communicated with the larger room. This too, had its literary associations, for here in old days a bed would be made up to accommodate Matthew Arnold when he was kept in town too late to get out to Harrow or Cobham. Later it was the working-room of the clerk who kept the CORNHILL

records and attended to the routine business of the magazine. Moreover, till the end of the firm's tenancy of the house, a visible reminder of Payn's occupancy hung over the mantelpiece in the larger room—where, as it was said, 'he smoked innumerable pipes and wrote innumerable novels'—a pen-and-ink sketch of Payn himself seated before his desk in the easy comfort of a dressing-gown, and turning round to face his visitor, with pen and pipe well in evidence.

As in his own work, so in that of others, he had a keen sense of construction and plot, of sound writing and good sense, and, what is not always to be found in a judge, a discriminating sense of humour which insisted on the acceptance of F. Anstey's *Vice Versa*, although George Smith himself confessed that he could discover no reason, in advance, why the book should be any great success. In this instance he was both courageous in his opinion and rewarded by immense success. But he did not, perhaps, carry big enough guns in the matter of insight and scholarship to sustain this kind of courage in backing his first impressions. Outside literature of the lighter order, where his judgment was keen, he was liable to get out of his depth, and would be seized by doubts if George Smith, on the strength of his Reader's opinion of a MS., proposed a figure for its purchase, in his own view merely commensurate with that opinion, in Payn's second thought far too bold. Nevertheless, Payn was successful in 'discovering' various authors of promise; let me name Henry Seton Merriman, and Conan Doyle and Stanley Weyman. Not only that, but he was generous in aiding beginners with his counsel and helping them to public recognition. As Stanley Weyman wrote, after Payn's death,

'I owed very much to the stimulus given me by Payn when he sat in that room of yours. Indeed but for his encouragement I doubt if I should have had the pluck to venture on any prolonged work. And I know that many others ought to say the same.'

There is a delightful story about Payn and his adverse verdict on *John Inglesant*, which cost the firm a great success. He was not alone in his opinion, for it may be remembered that the book was rejected by a whole string of publishers. Thereupon the author had fifty copies printed for himself and his friends. One copy he sent to Mr. Gladstone, as being likely to take interest in

its political and religious themes ; and rightly, for the review Gladstone wrote of it raised a great stir, and Messrs. Macmillan, who had previously rejected the book, now made a good offer for it, and published the story ; with what result we know.

To Smith, Elder the book had come in a far from inviting way. It was sent by a Manchester bookseller, one of their country customers, with a half-apologetic request that it might be looked at, and a letter written which could be shown to the author. Obviously the bookseller had no great opinion of it, and said nothing to bias Payn in its favour. In any case, the book was not in Payn's line of country. He reported against it, and forgot all about it. Consequently, when the book was a flaring success, and it was reported in the papers that Smith, Elder had refused it when offered to them, he was furious. It was a reflection on his literary judgment, he told George Smith ; and he insisted on writing to contradict the false statement. With a certain change of names he tells in his *Literary Recollections* what happened—

‘While upon the subject of publishers, I will narrate a story told me by one of that useful and innocuous class called “Readers.” He was in the house of Paternoster, Row & Co., but (one cannot but think fortunately for him) Row was dead. One day my friend received one of those charming brochures so common nowadays, full of ill-natured gossip about literature and its disciples. Among other disagreeable things, it said that the eminently successful work *Disloyala : or the Doubtful Priest*, which had run through fifty editions, had been rejected by his house some years ago. He showed this libel to his friend and employer, Mr. Paternoster.

“Is not this,” he cried, “an infamous statement?”

“What does it matter?” was the quiet reply ; “this sort of gentleman will say anything.”

“But I really can't stand it,” persisted the Reader. “It is a gross libel upon us both, but especially upon me ; I shall write to the man and give him a piece of my mind.”

“I wouldn't do that if I were you,” said Mr. Paternoster, still more quietly than before.

“But why not? I really must——”

There was a twinkle in Mr. Paternoster's eye, and a smile at the extreme corners of his mouth, which attracted the other's attention, and interrupted his eloquence.

“Is there any reason why I should not contradict this man?”

“Well, yes ; the fact is we did reject the book.”

“What? Do you mean to say I rejected *Disloyala*?”

"I am afraid so ; at all events we did it amongst us. I don't blame you ; I think it even now a dullish book."

"And you never told me ? Never let fall a word of it all these years ?"

"Certainly not. I thought it might distress you. I should not have told you now, but that I was taken unawares."

This to my mind is one of the prettiest stories I have ever heard. I should like to see the General who could be equally reticent, when the Chief of his Intelligence Department had omitted a precaution that would have secured him a victory ; or the solicitor who had lost his cause through the neglect of his counsel ; or the politician who had missed his point in the House through the shortcoming of his secretary. Yet Mr. Paternoster was a publisher, one of that fraternity who, if we are to believe some people, are incapable of a generosity. For my part (who have collected a considerable number of anecdotes of the human race) I have never heard a more creditable story, even of a Divine.'

So wrote James Payn of his own lapse, the tribute of a generous man to his generous chief.

I cannot resist telling another story of his editorship, which has a humour of its own. His handwriting, owing to arthritis in the fingers, was execrable, rivalling in illegibility the bad pre-eminence of Dean Stanley's. The story goes that he once rejected an article, but the contributor brought forward his letter of rejection as proof of acceptance, and as Payn himself could not read it, he was constrained to accept the gentler interpretation. Whether this be strictly true or not, it gains support from the article on 'Great Publishing Houses' in *T.P.'s Weekly* for October 25, 1912, wherein the writer vouches for having

'seen such a letter accepting for the *CORNHILL* the first short story of Mr. Cutcliffe Hyne. And certainly it was next to impossible to read it. As the MS. did not accompany it, and as the story duly appeared, the interpretation cannot be challenged.'

With Payn's assumption of the Editorship, a new experiment was made. To meet the competition of other magazines which contested the field with the *CORNHILL*, it was reduced in size and issued at 6d. instead of 1s., with a preponderance of fiction in its contents. But the experiment was not successful ; the *CORNHILL* aimed at maintaining its former standards : the sixpenny public looked for something else ; and in the end the *CORNHILL*, which had meanwhile given a start to a number of excellent writers, went back to its earlier price and form.

Of the sixty-nine works given under the name of James Payn, the vast majority were fiction. Of these four appeared serially in the *CORNHILL*: *A Grape from a Thorn*, *The Burnt Million*, *The Talk of the Town* (the story of William Henry Ireland, the forger of Shakespeare manuscripts), and *The Disappearance of George Drifell. By Proxy*, 1878, was the most popular of his novels, clenching his reputation, and after all these years he still commands his share of readers, if one may judge casually by noting reprints of *Lost Sir Massingberd* and *Walter's Word* and *What He Cost Her*, to name no more, on the railway bookstalls. For he could tell a story so that it went with a swing, straightforwardly and without trace of affectation. If he neither scaled the heights nor plumbed the depths of human feeling and human character, he was gifted with invention and a lively spirit; he had an eye for cheerful comedy; he could construct a good plot and weave ingenious situations, carrying his readers happily along with him, even if, as Leslie Stephen remarks, 'his wicked heroes had a curious aptitude for getting wedged in hollow trees or starved at the bottom of Cornish mines.' Underlying his tale 'there was always the simple, bright, shrewd, generous Payn of real life.' There was a breath, too, of his much admired Dickens in his manner of writing, but not with force enough to turn his characters into caricature, though as we look back to-day we may feel that they are perhaps a bit mannered in their ways and their mode of speech after what we suspect to be the conventional book-habit of the period.

Payn the novelist will hold a little niche of his own in literary history; Payn the man of warm human contacts comes near to many hearts. In his conversation, as in his weekly causerie in the *Illustrated London News*, in his essays, and in his last sheaf of memories, *The Backwater of Life*, there was a lively and genial touch that charmed his readers and, still more, his many friends, who remained singularly faithful to him through the years when he was crippled with arthritis.

It was his genius for friendship which accounted for so much of his influence upon the world of letters. His friends here were many, beginning with Charles Dickens and his literary circle of the 'fifties; to the last his 'singularly bright geniality' continued to gain him new friends. Not even the constant pain and depression, due to increasing ill-health, served to spoil his flow of good stories and his *joie de vivre*, though he could exclaim, 'Health, health,

health—nothing else seems worth having to poor me.' When his retirement was foreshadowed by his CORNHILL essay *The Backwater of Life*, the letters which poured in upon him from his old contributors, many of them, he was ashamed to confess, quite forgotten, touched him deeply. They, at least, had not forgotten his invariable kindness.

From 1894 onwards, Payn was more and more crippled by illness and confined to his house in Warrington Crescent. However, he steadily continued to read MSS. for the firm and to give practical advice from his long experience to the new partner, Reginald Smith, who, no less than his father-in-law, the head of the house, became cordially attached to Payn.

Let me conclude with a scene characteristic of his earliest bent and his enduring friendship. From his undergraduate days he had been a brilliant whist player, and in London his favourite recreation was his daily rubber at his club. When he could no longer go down to the club, some of his fellow-members arranged to come twice a week and play whist with him at his home. Though his hands were so stiff that he could hardly deal, his skill was unimpaired, his enjoyment unlessered. He refused to let his unceasing sufferings spoil his friends' visits. With steadfast courage and unbending resolution he would rally his powers and greet them with jest and laughter though a moment before he had been racked with intolerable anguish.

'His vivacity was so indomitable as occasionally to lead his friends to doubt for the moment whether his illness could be as serious as it really was . . . One went to his house, not as one goes to cheer an invalid, but with the hope, rarely falsified, of receiving cheer from him.'

So Leslie Stephen once more.

It was sunset; but the sun of friendship shone to the last.

LEONARD HUXLEY.

## LITERARY ACROSTICS.

A LITERARY Acrostic is published every month, and the Editor of THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE offers two prizes to the most successful solvers. The winners will be entitled to choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's catalogue. If several solvers send solutions of equal merit, the two whose answers are opened first will win the prizes.

## DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 79.

'The smith, a —— man is he,  
With large and sinewy hands;  
And the muscles of his brawny arms  
Are —— as iron bands.'

1. 'Great wits are sure to —— near allied,  
And thin partitions do their bounds divide.'
2. 'I am myself —— honest; but yet I  
could accuse me of such things that it were  
better my mother had not borne me.'
3. 'I see before me' the —— lie:  
He leans upon his hand—his manly brow  
Consents to death, but conquers agony.'
4. 'So then to his palace returned he,  
And he sat down to supper merrily,  
And he slept that night like an innocent man;  
But Bishop —— never slept again.'
5. 'Now, from the rock ——,  
Could the wan burghers spy  
The line of blazing villages  
Red in the midnight sky.'
6. 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be —— was very Heaven!'

## RULES.

1. Only one answer may be sent to each light.
2. Every correct light and upright will score one point.
3. With his answer every solver must send the coupon that is printed on page X of 'Book Notes' in the preliminary pages of this issue: and he must be careful to give also his real name and address.
4. Solvers should not write either the quotations or the references on the same paper as their answers. It is not necessary, or even desirable, to send them at all.
5. Solvers who write a second letter, to correct a previous answer, must send the complete solution as they wish it, and not merely state the desired alteration.
6. Answers to Acrostic No. 79 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE, 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1, and must arrive not later than March 20. No answers will be opened before this date.

## ANSWER TO No. 78.

1. J	aque
2. E	lizabet
3. S	carcit
4. S	panie
5. I	ag
6. C	holeri
7. A	lac

POEM: *The Merchant of Venice*, ii, 6, and iv, 1.

## LIGHTS:

1. H	As You Like It, ii, 5.
2. Y	King Henry the Eighth, v, 5.
3. L	The Tempest, iv, 1.
4. O	A Midsummer Night's Dream, ii, 1.
5. C	Othello, i, 1.
6. K	Measure for Measure, ii, 2.
	7. King Richard the Second, iv, 1.

Acrostic No. 77 ('Ring in the new'): The prizes, taken by the two solvers whose answers are first opened and found to be correct, are gained by Mr. L. R. M. Strachan, 40 Northfield Road, King's Norton, Birmingham, and Mr. F. A. N. Collier, Windmill Cottage, Wadhurst, Sussex. These two winners will choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's catalogue.

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